The Oxford Left Review

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Editorial

Over the last two years and throughout the preparation of this issue of the OLR, we saw rapid politicizations of urban space. From Wall Street to Tahrir Square, from Rothschild Boulevard to the Plaça de Catalunya, the images of millions taking their anger to the streets resonate in our memory. Their individual circumstances and the demands they raised were as diverse as the forms taken by the protests. Yet wherever streets were turned into laboratories for political action and extra-parliamentary forums, they soon revealed the political dimension of urban space we examine in this issue.

Where demonstrators did not explicitly address questions of ownership and power, police interventions sooner or later did. Their very presence turned urban space into a political arena whose *physical* contestation was paralleled by an *ideological* struggle over its interpretation and representation, as Chihab El Khachab (pp. 11-13) exemplifies in his analysis of Tahrir Square. Wherever these prolonged struggles occurred, they led to contradictions between different notions of the usage of public space and raised the question of who is to set this agenda.

In this issue of the OLR, we look at an urban space that has been reclaimed, politically charged, contested, sometimes fetishized and theorized in many different ways. We seek to widen these emerging breaks in our everyday understanding of urban space, guided by the search for leverage points that allow for its appropriation. These can provide ways of reversing its often hostile and alien nature and redirecting its forces to all those fighting the daily struggle for a better life.

Economic crisis has led to an increasing precariousness in urban living, and movements have sprung up in protest against this. In Tel Aviv just as in Madrid, millions encountered each other on the streets, realizing that their precarious economic situations were not an individual, but a shared condition. With the universal 'right to the city' remaining an abstract demand, austerity and the steeply rising cost of living exposed thousands to displacement, evictions and a new scale of urban poverty. For many, the reason for this urban precariousness goes by the name of gentrification. In "The Return of the Gentry" (pp. 5-10), Luka Boeskens argues for an economic, rather than cultural analysis of this phenomenon as the basis for a united front against gentrification. The flip side of this resistance is to ask how a non-gentrified, non-segregated, non-privatized city may look like and under what conditions it can be established? Boeskens' call for a "city of festivity", implies an irreversible departure from an urbanity that is based not on need but purchasing power, that withholds its surplus, and excludes us from its creative development.

Meanwhile, other movements seeking to challenge the economic austerity agenda as a whole have made reappropriated urban spaces a platform for their demands. No matter what one makes of the stories and ideas emanating from the Occupy camps, they have succeeded in giving questions of economic injustice a physical presence in our cities. Looking back at the year 2011, Frederike Kaltheuner (pp. 37-38) shares her mixed impressions of a rather disunited Occupy Berlin and asks why the movement failed to gain momentum in the German capital. Maybe it had to do with Occupy's aspiration to not only send a political message, but also create an urban space governed by radically different principles from the city surrounding it. In a further exploration of the Occupy movement, zach parton (pp. 39-45) spoke to Trevor Warren Griffith, Occupy activist from Chicago, about the struggle to maintain "alternative structures to the oppressive ones in existence" and the role of organization in a movement without centre and leaders. Reports of sexual assaults, for instance at Occupy Glasgow, and the reproduction of social divisions within some Occupy camps, cast doubt on their success to create a safe space, equally open to all, detached from an otherwise hostile environment. This raises a question which many of our contributors have taken up: in what ways do our visions for urban space entail and rely on a more radical rethinking of society as a whole?

Peter Hill (pp. 26-30) takes us back to the early days of the New Left, reviewing the debates on urban planning within its young publications *Universities and Left Review* and the *New Reasoner*. In the 50s, debates on the "shape of the city, about homes and lifestyles, were widening into arguments about the kind of people, the kind of society, then being created in Britain." Today, their search for a genuine civic community beyond "the oppressive closeness of the Victorian slum and the privatized and fragmented society of the suburb" remains as relevant as ever.

L. B. Stanislaus (pp. 31-36) invites us to look behind the shiny surface of our constructed urban landscape, using the example of Burj Khalifa, the world's highest and possibly ugliest building. Confronting the exploitative, dangerous nature of the work such prestigious buildings are based on, he argues for a "return to the analysis of labour relations and conflict" of which we lost sight "in our hasty search for a quick-fix, ethical capitalism." It is the duty and strength of a left analysis to see the creation of cities as inseparably connected to their underlying mode of production.

From the enforcement of spatial politics, to their very architecture, cities constantly remind us of who is in power, who is welcome and who is neither. Wherever we go, we find urban space to be shaped by social divisions and stratification, expropriation and alienation, ownership and exclusion, administration and coercion. Jordan Laris Cohen (pp. 14-21) provides an excellent example, looking at the active role of Yale University in creating spatial hierarchies in New Haven during the post-war period. In confronting the "politics of private space" that constituted Yale as a "racialized, exclusive space", his article challenges us to think of the opposite – a "politics of public space".

Chris Green, in "Whose Streets? Populism and Urban Space", (pp. 22-25), calls attention to similar modes of exclusion, based around the familiar 'town and gown' divide, in our own university city of Oxford. He goes on to analyse the multiple layers of ownership, belonging and different perceptions of space in the city, and calls us to challenge the very "ideological

foundations of urban space" by "rearticulating concepts of ownership."

Thinking from a different perspective about the place of the university in a wider social and political context, Emily Cousens (pp. 46-49) makes a strong case for a political student union. The power of organized students also resonates through Ani Kodzhabasheva's report (pp. 62-63) on Jérémie Bédard-Wien's visit to Oxford and his account of the outstanding success of Quebec's student movement.

A new departure for the OLR in this issue is our first piece of fiction, "The Financial System: Notes from the future" (pp. 59-61). We hope that this will be the beginning of a trend, and that we will be able to further explore the political potential of creative writing in future issues of the journal.

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Return Of The Gentry

Luka Boeskens

"A spectre is haunting our city centres: the spectre of gentrification. The history of all existing society is the history of struggles for our neighbourhoods." Be it burning cars in Berlin, anti-Olympics protests in East London or rent strikes in Brooklyn, the struggle for a better city seems inseparably linked to the struggle against gentrification. I will try to identify some recurring patterns in these struggles, as well as the theories of gentrification underpinning them. As I will make a case for putting urban theory "back on its feet", this article should also be understood as an invitation to stick your heads in the clouds for a while and envision a city that belongs to everyone.

The gentrification tale as it has been reproduced a thousand times across the board is quickly told: Long neglected working class districts are "rediscovered" by artists, students, subcultures and undergo a period of rapid cultural "upgrading". Accompanied by media hype, apartments are transformed into upscale condos, rooftop gardens spread like mushrooms on freshly renovated Victorian buildings and investors build gated-communities where council housing once prevailed. As the "gentry" returns from the suburbs to the city centre, it perpetuates a "class remake of the central urban landscape"[1] that goes hand in hand with a radical transformation of a district's cultural environment. The disappearance of pound shops and internet cafés runs in parallel with the displacement of the old working class occupiers who cannot keep up with the dramatic rent hikes. In some parts of London and New York this process has reached the spheres of *re-* and *super-gentrification*[2] where even middle-class families fear being priced out. Gentrification creates a new urban species: the *modern nomad* who is denied a humane life in the city centre, driven from district to district and ultimately forced to choose between poverty and a life on the periphery.

The City as a Brand

Not so long ago, the term "gentrification" was used primarily among critical urbanists, sociologists and those that sought to give a name to the abstract force they fought against. Over the last decade, however, researchers like Richard Florida have reframed the discourse and tried to turn the process of gentrification into a tool at the disposal of politicians, investors and planners. With his books *The Rise of the Creative Class* and *Cities and the Creative Class*, the American economist gained an illustrious fan base (including David Cameron[3]) and founded a consultancy that advises businesses, cities and governments that eagerly follow his trivial idea: in times of tough inter-metropolitan competition, the economic success of a city depends entirely on its success in attracting the so called "creative class". Confusingly, when Florida talks of the creative class, he is not thinking of artists and musicians but consultants, lawyers, researchers, IT-experts and entrepreneurs.

When mayors reduce themselves to ad-men of their cities, touting the creative class to settle down, two tendencies emerge: on the one hand, they seek to provide the "three T's" that the creatives are said to be looking for: *talent*, *technology* and *tolerance*(!). On the other hand,

they have to subsume these features under a unifying brand. "City" becomes a product that has to assert itself on the market. For all those that can't afford the real deal, the brand name fulfils an ideological function. The growing number of people who are permanently excluded from the material benefits of urban life are supposed to feed off mere local-patriotic imagery and slogans: "Hong Kong. Live it. Love it.", "Totally LondON" and perhaps the most sickening of all: "Berlin – poor but sexy".

Wherever cities chase after the creative class, bohemians, freethinkers, queer people and artists play a key role as "pioneers" in three ways: 1. The boutiques, cafés, galleries and creative spaces that they tend to set up magically attract the creatives. 2. Politicians who recognize this, quantify alternative lifestyles with "gay-" and "bohemian indexes"[4] and lure the scene with targeted concessions (tolerating squats, allowing for the intermediate use of abandoned buildings as studios, etc.) 3. For all the previous inhabitants, their arrival often marks the beginning of the end. They, the "pioneers", have unintentionally become the symbolic vanguard of gentrification.

Political Gentrification

Gentrification is the neoliberal city's urban development tool number one: often political decisions like zoning adjustments or the relaxation of rent control are what starts the process in the first place (for example see the 1957 Rent Act in Barnsbury, London). From there on, cities like London begin to advertise projects of "regeneration"[5] in which "infill schemes, […] management and investment in monotenure estates can contribute to the creation of more mixed and balanced communities."[6] The idea behind these phrases is the valorisation of all areas with a lack of purchasing power, i.e. those with a high proportion of immigrants, single mothers, unemployed or retired people. London identifies these areas with the "Index of Multiple Deprivation", rhetorically stigmatising them and ideologically preparing the replacement of its inhabitants. According to Loïc Wacquant, this spacial taint "grants the state increased latitude to engage in aggressive policies of control that can take the form of dispersal or containment."[7] Other than the economic inequalities at their root, confined, spacialised "problem zones" can be "kärchered"[8] out. The destruction of social housing and *dispersal* of its inhabitants is a good example. This summer, the then housing minister Grant Shapps applauded a proposal of the think tank Policy Exchange to sell all social housing in expensive parts of London. Once the economically weak are pushed out, policies of control aim at *containing* sources of disorder: the dangerous classes.[9] This entails various forms of exclusion, the expansion of jails, increased presence of police forces and their inclusion in the planning and construction of urban space.

It would be fatal to ignore the city's role in facilitating gentrification and using its disruptive dynamic to enforce spatial politics – although political instruments like social housing, progressive zoning, rent control and subsidies[10] do go a long way to mitigate the impact of gentrification. Nevertheless, concentrating on political power alone fails to account for why measures to ensure a "gentle gentrification" would be necessary in the first place. Individual political decisions are not the cause of gentrification; they only provide the framework in which it operates. Gentrification neither has a steersman, nor is it in any sense "natural" – a different city *is* possible. Yet, the more overtly the neoliberal city commits to gentrification, the more it seems inexplicable why hundreds of citizens take part in participation schemes, sign

petitions and compete for politicians' attention with suggestions for improvement. Before we can start to "take back the city," we need a theoretical understanding of gentrification and its causes. Otherwise, we are in danger of degenerating into blind actionism, pseudo-activity and, at worst, reaction. An example:

Burning Cars and Burning Tourists

The dominant school of thought in gentrification theory reads the process as an increase in demand for inner-city housing. This consumption-side theory draws on the motives of social grouplets at the heart of the process (artists, empty-nesters, young urban professionals), structural transformations of the working world and cultural shifts (from suburban sprawl to downtown renaissance, from the Athens Charter[11] to mixed-use zoning). Even though consumption-side theories are based on valid observations, it is often questionable whether they provide a good theoretical basis for resistance to gentrification. For those that trace gentrification back to increased demand, tackling it would logically require decreasing the endangered neighbourhood's attraction to incomers and investors. Tactics have ranged from protest against expensive boutiques to various forms of deterrents against "pioneers" and "gentrifiers". The symbol of this idea is the burning yuppie car – and it deserves better critics than those that find attacks on private property more scandalous than the ones on decent living conditions.

In Berlin, Germany's gentrification hotspot, the left has found a new enemy: tourists. Their purchasing power is said to increase price levels in neighbourhoods like Kreuzberg and Neukölln just as their apartments and hostels contribute to a shortage of housing space. The group "Hipster-Antifa Neukölln" has documented hundreds of graffiti slogans from the streets of central Berlin, which it describes as "xenophobic": "All Tourists Are Bastards", "Berlin doesn't love you" and "t(err)ourists go home!"[12] The "Hipster-Antifa" was founded as a provocative reaction to what they perceived as a misguided critique of gentrification: one that blames individuals (in this case, tourists) for structural developments. Regardless of whether tourist- and yuppie-bashing should count as "xenophobia" or not, the group reminds us not to mistake symptoms for causes. It should not be a problem that people (myself included) enjoy travelling; the problem is that touristic curiosity and changes of residence in the capitalist city necessarily lead to rent increases and contribute to the misery of others. Yes, sitting on the street drinking a coffee might be an act of gentrification – but if we let this perverse circumstance dictate our lifestyles, we have already lost.

Attempts to keep "newcomers" out of a district, always run the risk of falling back into reactionary categories, back to the idea of a supposedly unique neighbourhood that is intrinsically worth preserving and can be delimited along the more or less arbitrary lines of "how long have you been living here?", "how much do you earn?", "what do you consume?". Equipped with the rhetoric of "authenticity" and "naturalness," the part-time street militias and "homeland security" bloggers defend whoever they want to be part of their "we" against the socially constructed and equally hallucinated "otherness" of yuppies, hipsters and foreigners. The "Hipster-Antifa" reminds us that the conditions in impoverished areas like pre-gentrification Neukölln are not to be glorified but need to be abolished "together with poverty itself and its causes".[13]

This discourse in Berlin has highlighted the need for a structural, non-personalized critique of gentrification. Demand-based explanations have so far perpetuated disunity between students, artists and activists and the "original occupiers" when unity was needed the most. The latter are likely to regard "pioneers" as the cause of their misery whilst the former are paralysed by the guilt complex surrounding their instrumentalisation as "gentrifiers". As Arndt Neumann recently proposed, we should rather come to understand gentrification (following Giorgio Agamben) as the "expropriation of the Common"[14]: The infrastructure of bars, galleries and off-spaces that pioneers provide (often under precarious and self-exploitative conditions) constitutes a "culture capital".[15] As soon as these alternative spaces materialize as a "real culture capital" in the form of the neighbourhood's improved reputation and increased rents, the surplus of the pioneers' work is appropriated just as much as the factory worker's next door. Neither of them profit from their work and gentrification will likely displace both of them together. Nothing highlights the need for a close union between everyone who is affected more than their shared material interest: broad networks like the US Right To The City Alliance already follow this idea and bring together otherwise isolated resistances to gentrification.

It's the Economy, Stupid

A critical economic explanation of gentrification could offer theoretical insights and political perspectives for a broad alliance against gentrification. By the logic of capitalism, all capital surplus needs to be profitably applied and re-invested to ensure the realization of future gains. It's this law that accounts for the investment surges in real estate and development projects that shape our urban landscape. David Harvey explains: whenever profitable reinvestment comes to a halt in the *primary circuit of capital* - the sphere of commodity production - (be it due to saturated markets, high wages or scarce resources) and these barriers cannot be overcome (by disciplining labour, opening new export markets etc.), capital faces a crisis of overaccumulation.[16] In the worst case, labour and capital surplus remain unused, resulting in unemployment and devaluation. In most cases, however, some capital can be temporarily absorbed in the *secondary circuit*, the "built environments for production and consumption" such as infrastructure and building projects. From the perspective of critical geography, one can read the history of urban development as a series of these investment cycles: from Paris, 1853, where Georges-Eugène Haussmann's gigantic debt-financed building projects helped Napoleon overcome a capital surplus crisis,[17] to suburban sprawl and the explosion of home-ownership in the US of the 1940s – and all the way to the 'booms and busts' of housing bubbles in the Britain and Spain which successfully absorbed capital and labour surplus up to the point where even the secondary circuit collapsed under the pressure of amortization.

Just as these investment cycles offer a macroeconomic explanation of gentrification, the late Neil Smith's "rent gap" theory tells us the microeconomic side of the story: whenever the "gap" between a real estate's currently capitalized rent and its potential ground rent is wide enough, he argued, owners are incentivised to invest. Up to the 1980s, long periods of disinvestment, emigration and decay had widened this gap across European city centres. Once apartments were renovated, newly insulated, and equipped with roof terraces, the old rent had to rise to generate the expected profits. As Smith suggested in his paper's title, *A Back to the City Movement by Capital, not People*, critical economic approaches do not depend on sociological grouplets and changing lifestyles. Harvey and Smith look at the production rather than

consumption of housing, supply rather than demand, economics rather than the culture and unmask gentrification as what it is: a process inherent in the functioning of the capitalist city.

Towards a City of Festivity

From the Situationist International to Henri Lefebvre, there is no shortage of visions for realizing cities' potential and transcending the systemic forces that obstruct their implementation. Urban space could serve as a laboratory, a playground to test progressive organizations of community; a space that allows for different people and ideas to encounter each other in a relation of constant stimulation and cooperation rather than administered relations of competition and exchange; a city in which the unconstrained development of individual capacities is not a struggle but a fact of everyday life. In the modern world, Henri Lefebvre writes, "*homo sapiens*, *homo faber* and *homo ludens* end up as *homo quotidianus* but on the way, they have lost the very quality of *homo*."[18] While rural societies saw frequent periods of *festivity* breaking with their everyday life and eruptively setting free accumulated forces, modern urban life has been deprived of this countervailing element. Today's "illusions of festivity"[19] do not disrupt the production process, but have been smoothly integrated as a means of restoring the ability to work. Confined to designated leisure-zones, they do not disrupt the city's spatial order or gain autonomy from the cultural and political structures in which they occur. Lefebvre wants to see "everyday life become a work of art" and "every technical means be employed for the transformation of everyday life,"[20] up to the point where the antithesis between the quotidian and the festival disappears. It is needless to say that the city as we know it prevents this free play. Broken up into homogenized, hierarchized fragments, our city segregates, discriminates and deprives us of these benefits. To democratize the development of this space and appropriate its surplus, is to reclaim the *right to the city*.

In the post-industrial city, political and economic centralization coincide more than ever before. The city is a space in which the relations of power and production manifest themselves most explicitly and painfully in the daily lives of their inhabitants. On the other hand, living in the lion's den also puts the urban human in a unique position to gain control over these centralized forces and use the city's density for political organization. But where to start, in a city that has been able to incorporate even the most radical critiques into its publicity campaign?[21] The more the interests of individual companies and investors make space for the city itself to become the "capitaliste collectif en idée"[22], the clearer it becomes that this place wasn't built for its inhabitants. Resistance against gentrification is spreading across the globe and as people continue to take urban planning into their own hands, they should never stop asking questions: How can homelessness and vacancy exist side by side? Why should our choice of residence depend on our purchasing power? And who says that housing is only worth its exchange value? The cities we live in cannot answer these questions and never meant to – but it is imperative that we keep them at the back of our minds when exploring modes of autonomous living in solidarity. As Neil Smith said, "in the long run, the only defence against gentrification is the decommodification of housing."[23]

This seems far out of reach at the present stage and it would be foolhardy to believe that the steady expansion of "free spaces", housing cooperatives, syndicates and other forms of common ownership could ensure a smooth transition towards that goal. Yet, every single one of

these projects, every tiny space that resists valorisation can act as a showcase for a possible future of renewed urban life. They provide what is needed the most these days: positive visions for an urban life of prolonged festivity.

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1   Smith, N., 1996. *The New Urban Frontier: Gentrification and the Revanchist City*. p.39
2   Butler, T., and Lees, L., 2006. *Super-gentrification in Barnsbury, London: globalization and gentrifying global elites at the neighbourhood level.*
3   The government's new guru. In *The Economist*. 11 Nov 2010. (http://www.economist.com/node/17468554)
4   Florida, R., 2002. *The Rise of the Creative Class.*
5   The word "regeneration" comes up 113 times in Boris Johnson's latest "London Plan"
6   Mayor of London, 2011. *The London Plan, Spacial Development Strategy for Greater London.*
7   Wacquant, L., 2008. *Ghettos and Anti-Ghettos: An Anatomy of the New Urban Poverty. Thesis Eleven.*
8   Leading up to the riots in 2005, Sarkozy (then minister of the interior) called for cleansing the Parisian housing complex "Cité des 4000" with a "Kärcher"-high-pressure washer.
9   Clichy sous Bois, the inner-Parisian suburb where the 2005 riots started, has a population of 80,000, yet it is not served by any train network.
10   In Prenzlauer-Berg, Berlin, 60% of the original tenants returned after subsidized redevelopment measures - much more than after privately financed renovations and compared to the 20% returning after their apartments were transformed into condominiums. See Holm, A., 2010. *Wir bleiben alle!*. p.28
11   Document from 1933 in which the architect Le Corbusier proposed a strict spatial separation of living, working, recreation and circulation.
12   https://www.facebook.com/hipsterantifa
13   Ibid.
14   Neumann, A., Die Debatte um Gentrifizierung ist verkürzt. In *Analyse und Kritik*. Nr. 558.
15   Zukin, S., 1982. *Loft Living.*
16   Harvey, D., 2008. The Right To The City. In *The New Left Review* 53.
17   Ibid.
18   Lefebvre, H., 1971. *Everyday Life In The Modern World*. p.193
19   Lefebvre, H., 1974. *The Production Of Urban Space*. p.310
20   Lefebvre, H., 1971. *Everyday Life In The Modern World*. p.204
21   Burkhard Kieker, head of visitBerlin, asserts that so far the strong critique wasn't detrimental to tourism. "On the contrary, it made Berlin even more interesting." ("die tageszeitung" 09 Aug)
22   A term used first by Engels in "Socialisme Utopique et Socialisme Scientifique" and unintentionally reproduced by Hamburg's major, Klaus von Dohnanyi (SPD) as „Unternehmen Hamburg" ("Enterprise Hamburg") in 1983.
23   Smith, N., and Williams, P., 1986. *Gentrification of the City*.

REPRESENTING TAHRIR SQUARE

Chihab El Khachab

We will reflect in this article on the location of Tahrir Square in representations of the Egyptian revolution. When we speak of "representations", we are not adopting a mistakenly vague formulation. Our objective is to grasp reiterated presentations of the Egyptian revolution, shared by different social actors involved or interested in it. We will not discuss, therefore, "Western" representations as distinct from "Egyptian" representations; or "conservative" representations as opposed to "leftist" ones. What we seek to reach are objective intermediaries attributing specifiable, material traits to "Tahrir Square" as a location in the re-presenting of the revolution.

"Tahrir" radiates a certain aura, a certain sense of revolutionary utopia. Some will disagree, of course, preferring to think about it as a space of illegitimate rebellion, a space of chaos, or a space of danger for entrenched political interests. We could map such discussions along a divide between "progressive" and "non-progressive" forces, in Egypt and elsewhere, who fight over the semantics of the Square and, most importantly, over the legitimacy of the people it harbors. This semantic analysis would ignore, however, two crucial (material) factors.

The first is the ongoing contestation of the physical space of Tahrir Square. The struggle, here, is not between liberal and conservative Western elites, nor is it between civil and military discourses; it is between pro-government and anti-government groups who are, quite literally, throwing rocks at each other[1]. The Square is still a battlefield where quasi-military tactics are employed to secure control over its main entries and exits, its supply lanes, and its central plaza. When we try to localize Tahrir Square, then, we need to think about ongoing political fights being fought, physically, inside the Square itself.

The second factor is the ongoing non-contestation of this space. We have, here, a superficial contradiction; one needs to understand that Tahrir Square is only contested in particular moments of political effervescence, where a series of aberrant events (for instance, the acquittal of former regime members in the deadly "camel attack" of 2011) triggers a massive reaction (a civil protest) and a massive counter-reaction (a gentle repression). Otherwise, Tahrir Square is ordinarily empty, serviced by local vendors, or occupied by some marginal tents; or, as during the eighteen days of the revolution, occupied by a large, heterogeneous group participating in common chants, discussions, or other unrelated activities.

It is precisely insofar as Tahrir Square, as a physical space, is ordinarily non-contested, that its contestation becomes politically salient. Occupying the Square, in other words, is relative to its non-occupation; and its salience *qua* occupation is determined by the physical contestation – or possible contestation – of its physical space.

Had it not been for Tahrir Square's televised images, however, most of us would not have seen the revolution – or, perhaps, not seen it in quite the same way. We mean "seeing the revolu-

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1   One cannot ignore, in good conscience, the array of other objects thrown towards protesters, in most part: glass shards, tear gas canisters, Molotov cocktails, rubber bullets, live ammunition...

tion" once more in a literal sense: the actual witnessing of its unfolding. To be sure, this witnessing is not transparent. Quite the contrary, the various screens through which we witnessed the revolution have obstructed Tahrir Square's physical reality. This obstruction occurs in two fundamental ways: first, the selection of which angles, which images, or which people from Tahrir are presented to viewers; second, the enacting of a material distance between a viewer, comfortably installed on his couch[2], and a transmitter, witnessing the events firsthand.

What remains from the selecting and distancing of these images anchors, materially speaking, the very location of Tahrir Square in representations of the revolution. During the eighteen days of the revolution, the most common representation of Tahrir Square was a large overview, where the screen would be inundated with people seen either inside the plaza, in adjunct streets (e.g., in "Muhammad Mahmud", the site of a tragically well-known massacre), or in neighboring areas. These large overviews were interspersed, to different extents in different media outlets, with images shot "inside" the Square, so to speak, where the audience would be shown endless masses of people chanting, dancing, or raising shoes in discontent[3].

As seen on TV, then, Tahrir Square remains a place where millions of people have joined in a common struggle against oppression. Whether this struggle is viewed as legitimate or illegitimate is not the issue here. We can still confidently locate Tahrir Square within the very material image of masses joined in a common fight; an image which was shot using broad long shots, allied with on-the-ground views and interviews. This same material image traces the strongest association between Tahrir and revolutionary utopia (for some) or dystopia (for others). Indeed, we do not associate "Tahrir" and "Revolution" as a consequence of some abstract, metonymic association between the spatial core of Egypt's revolution and its totality; but, precisely, we associate "Tahrir" with "Revolution" insofar as its image effectuates, in its very material re-presentation, a metonymic relation between space and revolution.

We have defined, so far, two locations for Tahrir Square. It is located, first, in its physical space, which is defined by a dialectics between political contestation and ordinary non-contestation. Secondly, it is located in a virtual space, mediated through screened images, whose selection and, most importantly, whose *distance* from viewers fixes a material suggestion of revolutionary solidarity.

Some will ask us to indicate which location is most salient in what possible representation of the Egyptian revolution. We will be expected, here, to say that its physical location is associated with those who have been in Tahrir, and its virtual location with those who have not. This would, however, be a gross misapprehension. Tahrir's occupants have access to – and participate in – its virtual location through their phones, televisions, computers, etc.; while those who have never been in Tahrir have a possibility, given accurate information about ongoing protests

in the Square, to imagine struggles and non-struggles over its physical space. The physical and

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2   *Hizb kanaba*, or the "Party of the Couch", is in fact an expression in the revolutionary vernacular. It designates those conservative citizens who have been too "lazy" to directly participate in the anti-government protests in 2011.

3   These images remain frequent in representing ongoing anti-government protests in Egypt. However, they slowly faded away from Western media, where emphasis is put on the officialdom of Egyptian rulers, vs. the ragtag violence of protesters and counter-protesters.

the virtual location of Tahrir Square are thus, in a sense, mutually constitutive.

We will then be asked, if Tahrir is fixed in physical struggles and in screened images, why are its discursive interpretations so diverse? Egypt's high military council (SCAF), for example, sees "Tahrir Square" and its chaotic voices as being antagonistic to the orderly progress of the "revolution" and its protectors. For the Muslim Brotherhood, by contrast, "Tahrir Square" is an unnecessary nuisance insofar as Mursi's government embodies the real voice of the revolution. For revolutionaries still accruing to Tahrir, the Square remains an ongoing struggle against government oppression or inaction. Divergent voices frame "Tahrir Square" in different terms depending on their ongoing political agendas.

So does it matter whether Tahrir's location lies in its physical space and its material images, when these images are in any case liable to be reinterpreted for counter-revolutionary purposes? In other words, how can we pin down Tahrir's image in revolutionary terms when its interpretations are so diverse? In an obvious sense, one cannot fix definitive meanings for re-presentations, since different contexts will give rise to different interpretations depending on a group's political affiliation – be it the SCAF, the Muslim Brotherhood, the Western media, or the Egyptian revolutionaries. However, there is an equally obvious sense in which images of Tahrir Square, which are still circulated as they were during the revolution, retain a material association with their revolutionary context, around which counter-revolutionary forces need to navigate. What need would there be to minimize or to discredit revolutionaries if their revolutionary image, if not their revolutionary strength, was not (still) obviously present(ed)?

And what about historical perspective? We seem to conflate Tahrir Square's location during the eighteen days of the revolution with its location several months into Mursi's government. On one hand, we seem to insist on ongoing physical protests in the Square; on the other, we seem to portray an ahistorical fixity in its virtual location. This seeming lack of historical depth is fallacious, however, since we need to stress, first and foremost, ongoing struggles against the oppressive Egyptian State: struggles which occur inside and outside Tahrir Square. Any appearance of ahistoricity, here, is due to the very fixity of Tahrir Square's re-presentations, whose mechanical reproduction has managed to fix it as a timeless image of revolution. While ongoing historical processes are certainly operative in giving a semblance of fixation to Tahrir Square's current image, there is a real danger in fetishizing this image as being an actual non-temporal re-presentation of "revolution". This fetishism is visible, in part, in the commoditization of "Tahrir Square" in memorabilia sold in Egyptian souvenir shops. Tahrir's location, in its physical and its imaginal sense, is a site of revolutionary struggle. Such struggle is not, however, confined to Tahrir. And we must guard ourselves against fetishizing its location, lest we forget about what struggles run through its streets, and beyond.[4]

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4   The gender issue merits an important footnote, since physical contestation over the Square is also, fundamentally, physical contestation over *who* should be in the Square. No problem for men, so far as one can see. Yet for women, especially young ones, there are constant interrogations, in the Square and out, about whether they can be physically present or not; whether it is "too dangerous" or not; whether it is "their proper place" or not. Women's presence in the Square, while central to the success of the Revolution, is sometimes met with approval, sometimes with indifference, sometimes with doubt, and sometimes with violence.

Yale University and the Politics of Private Space

Jordan Laris Cohen

On the afternoon of 22 August 1967, Joan Thornell, a resident of New Haven's Hill neighborhood, called administrators of Yale University with a request[1]. After a white storeowner shot a young Puerto Rican man days earlier, the city had erupted in what was variously referred to as the "riot" or "rebellion" among predominantly poor communities of color[2]. Thornell and other organizers from the Hill Parents Association (HPA) opted to sponsor an evacuation of women and children from the area, fearing violence from a heavily armed New Haven Police Department (NHPD) in the wake of the brutality following similar circumstances in Newark. Speaking to Sam Chauncey, a special assistant to Yale President Kingman Brewster, Jr., Thornell implored Yale to consider offering one of its residential colleges as a temporary shelter for the Hill's most vulnerable residents.

Chauncey denied the request on the basis that the university had not been assured "adequate police protection" by city government—a prerequisite Thornell later observed had not been demanded by several churches, Wesleyan University, and some 200 New Haven families who volunteered food and shelter for the evacuees. Two weeks later Thornell wrote to Yale's president to convey her "deep disenchantment with the university" resulting from its "faint-hearted excuse" and inaction[3]. "Here was an opportunity," she explained, "for the involvement of the university in its community, but perhaps that is not the function of a university. Or perhaps Yale was involved in what it perceives to be its <u>true</u> community: the community of those who hold power." Brewster replied, "I am distressed by your distress…I simply ask you to believe that the motivation was neither callous nor indifferent."[4]

These events indeed reflected much more than the callousness or indifference of a couple of administrators, and were indicative of a much broader relationship between Yale and the city. That Chauncey justified inaction with fears about security is significant. As Thornell aptly noted, one is driven to question whose security, *from whom*? It seemed implausible that those in the streets would seek to harm evacuees from their own neighborhoods; likewise a powerful, established institution like Yale need not fear violence from the police or National Guard. It appears, then, that what Chauncey and Brewster were profoundly uncomfortable with was the presence of the residents *themselves* in the privacy of Yale's grounds. The university's refusal to open its gates to the frightened community, despite that its students had not even returned for the fall term, reveals serious anxieties about the occupation of campus space by outsiders. Rather than welcome evacuees as a humanistic institution let alone neighbor, Yale pointedly denied its responsibility to New Haven in the name of its own prerogatives, and of serving its own, circumscribed community.

In order to fully appreciate the ideas of race, security, and exclusivity that underlie this interaction, we propose a framework that integrates issues of campus policing, urban renewal, and tax exemption during the postwar period.[5] "Privileged segments of society", David Harvey writes,

"use whatever powers of domination [they] can command (money, political influence, even violence) to try to seal [themselves] off (or seal off others judged undesirable) in fragments of space within which processes of reproduction of social distinctions can be jealously protected."[6]

Campus police maintain special hierarchies by determining those who belong in the university community, and keeping away outsiders. The New Haven urban renewal programs of the 1950s-60s, which Yale presidents closely supported and advised, can be similarly understood as a "power of domination" used to police space and exclude undesirables—people of color and the working-class more broadly[7]. Finally, the university's controversial "policy of purchasing property and removing it from the tax roll" asserted an extreme kind of privatization: productive space that had once contributed would now only serve Yale, which thereby "[ate] into the vitals of the city."[8] By pursuing these three interconnected policies, Yale forged what is deemed a "politics of private space" during the postwar period. In doing so, the university demarcated itself as a racialized, exclusive space and community of interest to be protected and served, while ignoring and repudiating obligations to the city.

Through the practice of securing space and controlling access, campus police constantly delineate the university community from those who do not belong. Such everyday interactions form part of what Harvey calls "the production of urban consciousness," by which space is imbibed with social meaning.[9] Police, argues Robert Fogelson, "have always done more than just enforce the law, keep the peace, and serve the public. They have also decided, or at least helped to decide, which laws to enforce, whose peace to keep, and which public to serve."[10] In such a manner New Haven resident Edward Grant describes how he understands his claim to geographic belonging in relation to police behavior: "Because, see, the cops can't go after Yalies…. They could go at us, but they couldn't go at them, you know. In the first place, they asked you what you doing downtown…. You know, a black man downtown. What is the black man doing downtown in the city of New Haven?"[11]

From its 1894 inception the Yale Police Department (YPD)—by all accounts the first of its kind in the country[12]—has performed the duty of discerning and removing those who did not belong. Founding Yale Police officer Bill Wiser thus understood his "first thing to do…was to keep all suspicious characters from the campus."[13] To illustrate, Wiser relates an anecdote in which he "found a colored gentleman prowling around one of the entrances," presumed he was begging, and then "piloted him out" from campus.[14] The category of "suspicious characters" was thus fundamentally understood in racial and class terms, and appears to have continued likewise.

Sixty years later YPD officer Frank McKeever described identifying a group of youths as "Townies" based on their "Italian extraction," clothing, and "suspicious mannerisms." These visual designations were necessarily sharper for Black residents, however, for whom the color line left "little doubt as to the boundaries between 'we' and 'they.'"[15] Such racial dynamics were compounded by the fact that throughout the 1950s, the YPD remained virtually all white.[16] A series of YPD reports from the summer of 1957 reveal that the only individual visually identified as a criminal, by the mere fact of his presence, was a "colored man picked up for loitering outside [an] entrance"—this despite the fact that the vast majority of crimes recorded

were committed by white students.[17]

The escalation of campus policing must be read against a backdrop of massive Black migration to New Haven during this period, which rendered the need to maintain racial divisions ever more pressing.[18] The Black community of New Haven had long been a presence on Yale's campus, where "Negro service was part of the tradition" and "coachmen, butlers, or manservants…[knew] how to attend gentlefolk."[19] Yet such employees often stepped onto campus as outsiders; they could work for Yale, but could not be conferred true membership in the university community. Black workers were "treated in racial terms" and occupied roles that marked them as separate.[20] Neither did the increasing presence of Black students at Yale constitute or engender a significant engagement with the surrounding community. When an angry alumnus wrote to the university in 1949 over the appointment of Yale's first Black football captain, Secretary Reuben A. Holden assured him, "[T]here is no cause for alarm with regard to the racial issue… I might be worried about an indication of the tendency you fear, were it not for the fact that this is obviously an isolated case…[and] does not mean a trend of any type."[21]

Edward Grant, whose father was a janitor at Yale, hence spoke of a "silent separation between Yale and the community."[22] Despite his father's full-time employment on campus, Grant only learned in the mid-1960s that Yale had begun to accept Black students (though it had since the nineteenth century).[23] The transformation of campus security nationwide, from "the watchman-janitor image" of the pre-war period to "formal organizational police structure," was also in reaction to a loss for the sense of the campus as a mythical "safe haven," free from outside ills.[24] Criminologist Michael C. Smith writes, "the privileged sanctuary status of the campus began to diminish in the post-World War II period…with the wall between academe and the world outside disintegrating."[25] As Teresa Caldeira has observed in the context of São Paulo's "fortified enclaves," a central component of maintaining such a "dream of independence and freedom" from the city is a private police force that "carefully and rigorously exercis[e]" the rules of inclusion and exclusion.[26]

During the 1950s-1960s, Yale took a number of steps in line with this national trend. It joined a handful of other Ivy League universities in 1953 to found the first coordinated association of campus police departments.[27] In January 1959, Yale helped the NHPD found the Police Science and Administration Program of New Haven College, whose purpose was to train police officers for both Yale's campus and for the city.[28] While the university would refuse less than a decade later to open its doors to the Hill evacuees, it agreed to provide instructors as well as the classrooms for this program. Just as major cities throughout the country shifted toward a "professional model" of policing, Yale appointed a former FBI agent as its first University Security Director in 1959.[29] The following years continued to be a time of "reorganization, modernization, and training" for the Yale Police Department (YPD).[30]

Alongside "strict access control" maintained via private policing, one 2007 sourcebook on campus safety identifies urban renewal programs aimed at slum clearance as another "model [security] strategy."[31] In such a way both Vanderbilt University and the University of Pennsylvania, similarly situated among increasingly poor and Black neighborhoods, expanded during mid-century in a way that "reflected allegiance to the principles of campus isolation and exclusivity—and a commitment to escape from the worst elements" of urban life.[32] In both cases university administrators worked closely with city officials to bulldoze "blighted" areas

and construct new roads.[33] Just as Yale sought to control those on its campus, the university effectively policed the space (and race) of its neighbors through its extensive involvement in Mayor Lee's redevelopment initiatives.

James Baldwin's famous characterization of urban renewal as "Negro removal"[34] was not lost on New Haven, where families of color in were 4.5 times more likely than their white counterparts to be forcibly relocated (often multiple times).[35] Poor communities that such policies were supposed to aid often challenged the notion of their neighborhoods as "slums" or "blighted," and in any case noticed demolitions were not typically met by the promised construction of accessible new homes.[36] Large swaths of Dixwell, the primarily Black neighborhood bordering the west end of Yale's campus, were demolished, uprooting many churches and community organizations in the process.[37]

Likewise white working-class ethnic communities (Italian, Jewish, and Irish) were permanently splintered by the construction of the "Oak Street Connector" in 1959, an early keystone of Lee's urban renewal program.[38] Yale President Alfred Griswold heaped praise onto this project, and the same year the university's Alumni Board voted unanimously to express its "appreciation and commendation for the outstanding program of urban redevelopment being carried forward by New Haven."[39] Griswold's successor, Kingman Brewster, Jr., developed a remarkably close relationship with Lee as he advised and helped implement the mayor's renewal agenda.[40] In fact, after Lee responded to the riot of August 1967 with a firm language of law and order, the mayor wrote to Brewster, "it was support from people like you which gave me the courage to address the City in this fashion."[41]

The ideal of Yale's separation from New Haven was most epitomized, however, by an ill-fated "Ring Road" that would have cordoned off the university and downtown area from the rest of the city. A centerpiece of Lee's 1953 master redevelopment plan, the proposed expressway provoked "outright rage by many community groups," who believed "the road would starkly divide the city into racialized areas of a 'safe, white' corridor down scenic Prospect Street [including Yale]," and an "isolated black and Hispanic ghetto" made up of Dixwell, the Hill, Newhallville, and Westville.[42] As with other renewal programs, Yale was intimately implicated in planning. Though fully aware of the project's extreme unpopularity among city residents, Brewster continued to avidly push for the road, and even petitioned Connecticut Governor John Dempsey to allocate state funds for the "important project."[43] Though grassroots resistance eventually halted its construction, the Ring Road furnishes a sharp image of Yale's attempts to isolate itself from the city, at significant economic cost to those it excluded.

The university's aggressive refusal to pay municipal property tax constitutes a crucial third prong in the "politics of private space," which has acted as a frequent and underlying source of resentment for New Haven residents. Given its tax-exempt status, Yale's acquisition of campus and commercial properties entailed withdrawing vital sources of revenue from the city, which in this sense retracted as the university expanded. The maintenance of this "ancient proviso" occupied a special priority among administrators, who realized "[t]he sums of money involved are enormous."[44] Recognizing the "heavy burden" this placed on residents, attorney F.H. Wiggin nevertheless recommended in 1959 that administrators display unwavering resolve: "Compromise, weakness, carelessness or sharp practice might do [the university]

incalculable damage."[45]

Over the next year the Yale Office of Information (YOI) developed and honed a line of argument to justify the university's relationship to New Haven.[46] This series of talking points and statistics formed a virtual mantra among Yale officials discussing town-gown relations: the university's payroll, building contracts, student expenditures, alumni gifts, libraries, art galleries, concerts, even student blood donations were invoked in defense of the tax exemption. From February 5-May 7, 1961, the YOI brought its arguments for Yale's tax-exempt status into New Haven living rooms on Sunday evenings from 6:15-6:45pm, in a serial radio broadcast entitled "Yale, Your Neighbor" (YYN).[47] The show began, "Yale is your neighbor, a community in itself, yet an integral part of the civic, economic, social and cultural life of New Haven." Conspicuously absent among various human interest pieces illustrating Yale's benefits to the city was any mention of the original political context of these arguments.

Administrators were often puzzled at how New Haven residents and politicians could fail to appreciate the university's bountiful contributions, and continue to demand changes in tax policy. Yet Edward Grant's observation that "a lot of people…born and raised in New Haven, ain't never been inside Yale" begs the question of just how meaningful and accessible its lectures, concerts, and so forth were to the city.[48] Resident Peter Spodick has also commented on how the university's looming grandeur and wealth alienate low-income communities: "The whole fucking place has a moat around it wherever you look…. Yale is an extremely satisfied, self satisfied, quote, 'neighbor,' but they're not neighbors."[49]

The university's tax exemption again became a full-blown political issue in the late 1960s. Alderman Bartholomew Guida made an organized attempt in 1968 to challenge Yale's zoning ordinance, but was headed off by a concerted university effort with the backing of Mayor Lee.[50] A year later New Haven's financial straits became so dire that Brewster's close friend and ally was forced to confront Yale directly. By this time Yale's operating budget had risen to more than twice that of New Haven's, and the city's shrinking tax roll saw the average resident's property taxes increase by over 70% in less than a decade.[51] In a plea to keep the city running, a desperate Lee proposed the university set aside 3% of its budget (about $3 million at the time) each year for city programs—a flat payment that constituted half of what the university would pay were it taxed. Such a policy the mayor explained would "enable Yale to truly pioneer…a role for the urban university as an urban citizen," which cared for and contributed to the well-being of its surroundings.[52] *The New Haven Register* hailed the proposed plan, believing that Yale paying a portion of the tax burden could lead new possibilities in town-gown relations.[53]

As in the summer of 1967, however, Yale turned its back on the city. Brewster declined Lee's proposal on the basis that its endowment (more than 97% it would appear) was tied up in private donations, grants, and other earmarked funds.[54] Rejecting this opportunity to become an "urban citizen," Brewster reasserted the university's separation from and lack of obligation toward the city. Yale's campus and the other land it owned would serve its community exclusively, to the continued detriment of its neighbors.

Yale's decision to close its gates to frightened Hill evacuees in August 1967 was no mere accident or aberration, but was consistent with wider policies and attitudes we have called the "politics of private space." At a time when the city's racial composition was radically

shifting, Yale police helped maintain the campus as a predominantly white space, in which Black residents could work but expect little genuine integration or membership. Beyond the boundaries of campus, Yale administrators worked closely with Mayor Lee to advance urban renewal programs that disproportionately harmed Black neighborhoods—what the paper has suggested should be viewed as another form of policing space. Lastly, Yale's refusal to pay its share of property tax to the city articulated a radically isolationist and self-serving vision, which the university vigorously defended throughout the 1960s. The underlying logic of these three strategies entailed protecting private, racialized space from, and eschewing responsibility toward, those regarded as outsiders. Understanding these policies in relation to one another reveals the centrality of geography in Yale's contentious relationship with New Haven, and suggests the construction of an oppositional "politics of public space" must account for the manifold mechanisms through which spatial hierarchies are maintained and reproduced.

1   Joan Thornell, Letter to Kingman Brewster, Jr. September 6, 1967. Kingman Brewster, Jr., President of Yale University, Records, Series I Box 161 Folder 6, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.
2   Herbert F. Janick, "Racial Violence of the 1960s." Connecticut's Heritage Gateway; For a discussion of this terminology, see Fred Harris, "Now we're getting together," Yale Daily News, September 29, 1967, 4.
3   Thornell, Letter to Kingman Brewster, Jr. September 6, 1967.
4   Kingman Brewster, Jr., Letter to Joan Thornell. September 11, 1967. Kingman Brewster, Jr., President of Yale University, Records, Series I Box 161 Folder 6, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.
5   Admittedly this gaze toward the inner workings and logic of the university does not adequately account for various forms of resistance that emerged to counter New Haven's redevelopment initiatives and assert alternative visions for city politics. For a definitive account of such efforts see Mandi Isaacs Jackson, Model City Blues: Urban Space and Organized Resistance in New Haven (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2008).
6   David Harvey, Consciousness and the Urban Experience: Studies in the History and Theory of Capitalist Urbanization (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985): 14.
7   Jackson, Model City Blues, 15.
8   Douglas W. Rae, City: Urbanism and its End (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003): 20.
9   Harvey, Consciousness and the Urban Experience, 251.
10   Robert M. Fogelson, Big-City Police (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977): 12.
11   Edward Grant, 37. Oral Histories Documenting New Haven, Connecticut. Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library
12   Seymour Gelber, The Role of Campus Security in the College Setting (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, 1972): 16.
13   Bill Wiser, Yale Memories (New Haven : The Tuttle Morehouse & Taylor company, 1914): 18.
14   Ibid.
15   William Michael Johnston, "On the Outside Looking In: Irish, Italian and Black Ethnic Politics in an American City," (Phd diss., Yale University, 1977): 243.

16   See Reuben A. Holden, Secretary of Yale University, Records, Series II Box 52 Folder 324, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

17   Yale University Police Department, "Summer Thefts," report from October 17, 1957. Alfred Whitney Griswold, President of Yale University, Records, Series I Box 46 Folder 434, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

18   This influx, part of the process historians have deemed the Second Great Migration, woefully coincided with a precipitous decline in the industrial sector. Rae, City, 14. Representing just about 5% in 1940, the city's Black population doubled by 1950 and again by 1960. Johnston, "On the Outside Looking In," 265.

19   Robert Austin Warner, New Haven Negroes: A Social History (New York: Arno Press & The New York Times, 1969): 247, 19.

20   Johnston, "On the Outside Looking In," 248.

21   Reuben A. Holden, Letter to Franklin G. Russell. May 31, 1949. Reuben A. Holden, Secretary of Yale University, Records, Series I Box 13 Folder 170, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

22   Grant, 38. Oral Histories Documenting New Haven, Connecticut.

23   Ibid., 33.

24   Gelber, The Role of Campus Security in the College Setting, 28.

25   In Jerlando F.L. Jackson and Melvin Cleveland Terrell, Creating and Maintaining Safe College Campuses (VA: Stylus Publishing, 2007): 6.

26   Teresa P.R. Caldeira, "Fortified Enclaves: The New Urban Segregation," in Theorizing the City, edited by Setha M. Low (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1999): 91.

27   Gelber, The Role of Campus Security in the College Setting, 32.

28   Police Science and Administration Program. Reuben A. Holden, Secretary of Yale University, Records, Series III Box 282 Folder 1017, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

29   Van V. Burger, "Transplanted Special Agent," Yale Daily News, February 25, 1960, 2. For a discussion of the movement to professionalize American police departments, see Fogelson, Big-City Police, 155, 48.

30   Annual report of the Yale University Police Department 1960-1961, 5. Reuben A. Holden, Secretary of Yale University, Records, Series II Box 131 Folder 1171, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

31   Jackson and Terrell, Creating and Maintaining Safe College Campuses, 131-2.

32   Ibid. On Penn, see Margaret Pugh O'Mara, Cities of Knowledge: Cold war Science and the Search for the Next Silicon Valley (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005): 143-4.

33   Ibid., 152-3, 158.

34   James Baldwin, Conversations with James Baldwin, edited by Fred L. Standley and Louis H. Pratt (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1989): 42.

35   Rae, City, 340.

36   Lillian Brown, 4; 19. Oral Histories Documenting New Haven, Connecticut. Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

37   Johnston, "On the Outside Looking In," 267.

38   Jackson, Model City Blues, 13.

39   Alfred Whitney Griswold, Letter to Richard C. Lee. October 19, 1959. Reuben A. Holden, Secretary of Yale University, Records, Series III Box 282 Folder 1015, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library; Robert Sargent Shriver, Jr., Chairman of the Yale Alumni Board. Letter to Richard C. Lee. June 18, 1959. In Ibid.

40   Melvin J. Adams, Letter to Kingman Brewster, Jr., February 23, 1967. In Ibid.

41   Richard C. Lee, Letter to Kingman Brewster, Jr. August 25, 1967. In Ibid.

42   Jackson, Model City Blues, 17.

43   F.H. Wiggin, Yale President's Office memorandum. January 15, 1960. Reuben A. Holden, Secretary of Yale University, Records, Series III Box 282 Folder 1015, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library; Richard C. Lee, Letter to John N. Dempsey. October 5, 1966. Kingman Brewster, Jr., President of Yale University, Records, Series I Box 160 Folder 13, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

44   Reuben A. Holden. "Excerpts from talk at Rotary Club." September 15, 1959. Reuben A. Holden,

Secretary of Yale University, Records, Series III Box 282 Folder 1015, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library; F.H. Wiggin. "Yale University. Confidential Memorandum for the Officers Concerning Non-Taxation and Use of University Tax-Exempt Buildings." April 22, 1959. In Ibid.

45   Ibid.

46   See Carlos F. Stoddard, Jr. [Yale Director of Information] Letter to Reuben A. Holden. February 19, 1960. Reuben A. Holden, Secretary of Yale University, Records, Series III Box 282 Folder 1015, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

47   Yale University Office of Information. Transcripts from "Yale, Your Neighbor." In Ibid., Series III Box 282 Folder 1018.

48   Grant, 38. Oral Histories Documenting New Haven, Connecticut.

49   Peter Spodick, 12-13. Oral Histories Documenting New Haven, Connecticut. Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

50   See "Guida petition [for taxing private and public universities]." Kingman Brewster, Jr., President of Yale University, Records, Series I Box 108 Folder 1, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

51   Richard C. Lee, Letter to Kingman Brewster, Jr., 1. March 28, 1969 Kingman Brewster, Jr., President of Yale University, Records, Series I Box 160 Folder 15, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

52   Ibid., 2.

53   Francis J. Whalen, "$3 Million Per Year Asked in Lieu of Tax," New Haven Register, March 31, 1969.

54   Kingman Brewster, Jr., Letter to Richard C. Lee. April 13, 1969. Kingman Brewster, Jr., President of Yale University, Records, Series I Box 160 Folder 15, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

Whose Streets? Populism and Urban Space

Chris Green

The call-and-response chant of "Whose streets? Our streets!", while certainly predating the Occupy movement, has nevertheless appeared to reach a level of ubiquity with its emergence. By no means limited to Occupy, it certainly appears to be a common refrain on most demonstrations, and yet it does have a certain reflexivity with the movement. This is perhaps unsurprising, as although any attempt to generalize on a phenomenon as varied and at times abstract as Occupy is potentially misguided, there has been a reasonably clear articulation of a sense of *reclamation* of urban space in the rhetoric and practices of the movement. The two things contained within this phrase which strike me as interesting are both the use of the streets as an object of political attention, and the sense of unity and ownership. Occupy is by no means the first social movement to both articulate and express itself through the spaces in which those making demands live and work, but what warrants further attention is the way in which it directly challenges preconceptions of urban space at a time of economic crisis, when there are clearly other forces attempting to do the same.

When groups talk of reclaiming the streets, there are clearly two identifications at work: with an object that is at least partially territorially defined, and with an excluded, marginalized group as a whole. This raises the question of whether one identification is *primary*, and is then disrupted by the development of the other, or whether both identifications form part of a whole. On the latter, the question is simply whether the formation of an identification with an urban space is reached *through* an already felt socio-economic or class identity, or if the processes of development of both identifications cannot meaningfully be separated.

If we took the discourse of reclamation of urban space at face value, as implying an actual lost or ignored ownership, it would be easy to dismiss with a purely legal, material conception of urban space. There is clearly something more at play. What this narrow, legal definition of urban space as property misses is precisely that our understanding of the city is constructed from direct human experience with it, an engagement which is both constituted by, and itself constitutes, the identifications necessary for a movement like Occupy to develop from.

In what ways can we think about urban space? Henri Lefebvre distinguishes between three conceptions of space: a *material* space which has been transformed by the actions of generations of humans, a physical history of labour; a *social* space of institutions, laws and conventions; and a *mental* space of the constructed representations of the people within it[1]. If we use this model, the idea of ownership defined by law clearly relies on the primacy of social space in our conception of the city. Every inch of our urban landscapes, from roads to buildings to parks, is clearly owned in a purely legal sense; but this is not to say that the city cannot be equally felt to belong to those whose labour constantly reshapes and reproduces it, and whose identities are formed only with reference to the structures of the space they live in.

Oxford itself is an obvious example of multiple layers of ownership, belonging and perception of the city existing within the same material space. The institutions, conventions and rules of the University and its distinct points of architectural reference coincide with a mental representation of the city that is demarcated along the lines of the division of labour within it. These fall between the University, its employees and students; a tourist industry that sells and reproduces a certain history of the city; and businesses that either rely on the above or exist despite them. Interestingly, Oxford has an additional explicit *temporal* division of the city space: the peculiarity of the University calendar further contributes to this differentiated experience between inhabitants. What is implicit in the 'town and gown' cliché is that multiple social and mental spaces can occur symmetrically within the same geographical and material space of the city, and overlapping the more direct spatial segregation of communities within the city on socio-economic lines.

It is precisely here that the street acquires its emotive weight: what is a central location for the lived experience of an individual or group within a city is simultaneously merely a pathway for others. Roads that people live on are roads that others simply drive through to get elsewhere, or to simply get to the city from one of the nearby satellite towns. These multiple experienced spaces of the city alienate and devalue one another. This alienation can manifest itself politically, and often in a reactionary or violent manner, when groups are formed, sometimes spontaneously, by these antagonisms within urban space.

Here we can return to the question of identifications with urban space, and whether they are prior to, or develop through, the constitution of a marginalised group who consider themselves as such. Ernesto Laclau argues that populism cannot be seen as the ideology or mobilisation of an already constituted group, but as a way of constituting the very unity of the group itself. Laclau identifies the category of *social demand* as important in this formation of the people. Using the example of recent agrarian migrants to a city who demand a higher level of social housing, he states that if the institutional system is unable or unwilling to satisfy their demand, over time it will begin to be seen in *equivalence* with other localised demands, such as better access to education and healthcare. The two resultant developments are an increased perception of the interconnectedness of demands, and an antagonistic distance between 'the people' and the institutional system that fails to meet their needs[2].

This understanding of populism has a clear parallel with the rhetoric of Occupy, which has displayed a tendency towards formulating an equivalential articulation of demands and experiences. However, what is clear is that function of equivalence within the context of the city is severely distorted by the different functioning levels of space and the experiences of them. While social demands of individuals can feasibly become attached to each other in this equivalential way, the structures of urban space clearly create differentiated groups. This interaction between difference and equivalence was illustrated in the apparently spontaneous mass clean-up efforts immediately after the riots in cities England in August 2011[3]. While the fatal shooting of Mark Duggan prompted an outburst of action resulting in mass property damage, this in itself sparked a temporary civic counter-movement in the form of voluntary road-sweeping and repair work. In both instances a distinct event acted as the point around which a temporary social unity was constructed along a particular felt equivalence, in this case, the protection of

small, independent businesses (and an often barely concealed moral superiority)[4].

Both the riots and the clean-up response, however, can be seen as simultaneous articulations of equivalence and difference, a declaration of the unity of a sectional part of a city in opposition to an other. While the formation of the *other* may be seen as essential for this form of identification to work, the already existing differentiating structures of the city interfere with this process, aiding the articulations of antagonisms between one urban group and another, and not towards the more genuinely oppressive institutions and practices that can be located within the legal apparatuses of the city. The different layers of social and mental space and time experienced within the city, and the geographical division of work and residential zones on socio-economic lines, work to undermine the ability to form the type of populist identities needed to enact social change in the way Occupy has attempted. The situatedness of individuals within this divided social space already constitutes them as a subject *before* this process of equivalential identification occurs, precisely because individual experience of urban space is already differentiated. The equivalential rhetoric of Occupy, best expressed in the now ubiquitous '99%' theme, was arguably too vague to subsume more specific, localised and immediate demands.

An effect of this seemingly necessary lack of specificity in the language of reclamation is the flexibility of the terms and concepts in use. English Heritage, a well-known Government quango, has a campaign entitled 'Save Our Streets', which is mostly concerned with reducing the number of 'superfluous' road signs in towns and villages[5]. While seemingly a harmless, if rather pedantic endeavour, what is clear is that the attempt to constitute the 'our' in 'our streets' varies significantly depending on the power or class relations from which it is articulated. The 'our streets' of English Heritage and of the post-riot clean-up, not only have a distinct class character (the protection and maintenance of petit-bourgeois business districts), but are articulated with a sense of unity with the institutional establishment. When a group like English Heritage uses a phrase like our streets, the attempt is clearly to present and consolidate the interests of a particular group in society as universal concerns, even if these worries are not voiced by those immediately affected. The construction of the Bodleian's Storage Facility in Swindon avoided drawing the ire of those concerned with the architectural integrity of a city many of whom don't live in, let alone need to locate books in. Similarly, Occupy St Paul's protesters were demonised by some for interfering with the tourism industry in London. The implication is clear: a particular interest of a section of society relating to an urban space is presented as a representation of the interests of the city as a whole.

The challenge for social movements like Occupy is to dispute the narrow, legal conception of ownership of urban spaces which constructs a felt idea of the city which reifies and reproduces unequal relations of power. While the city can provide public amenities such as parks, libraries and swimming pools, this process is linked to its role as mediator between localised social forces: access to these public spaces can be, and increasingly is, restricted or denied as and when city institutions require it. Recent reactions of state and city institutions towards challenges to the status quo in urban spaces have been definitive and symbolic. The criminalisation of squatting in the UK while empty buildings become an increasingly common sight on city streets is a clear example of the maintenance of the ideological foundations of urban space, as was the violent and brazen eviction of Zuccotti Park in New York City. Expressions of

working-class and community creativity towards the city are at best co-opted and more usually suppressed. Frustration and alienation within urban life becomes distorted and misplaced, with groups, communities, or postcodes blaming each other for the problems they all share. The important point to stress is that all our conceptions of urban space, the architecture of a city, its institutions, and our own mental representations of it, are the result of a lived experience, what Lefebvre calls a physical history of labour, and that this cannot be reduced to the interests or ownership of a particular section of the urban population. Regardless of whose name is on the forms, most football fans are under no illusion as to who their club really belongs to, and would think that the *owners* would do well to keep this in mind. When challenges to urban space visibly side with business, finance, or any other exclusionary group, a space for rearticulating concepts of ownership arises and must be taken. A good place to start is a reminder of exactly whose streets they are.

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1   Henri Lefebvre (2003), "Space and the State", in Brenner et al., *The State/Space Reader,* Oxford: Blackwell, p.84.

2   Ernesto Laclau (2008), *On Populist Reason*, London: Verso, pp. 72-74.

3   http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-14456857

4   "This shows we will not let these criminals beat us...we will not surrender our streets to these mindless morons." Enfield Council Cabinet Member for The Environment, quoted ibid.

5   http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/caring/save-our-streets/

IMAGINING THE CITY, 1957-59

Peter Hill

> …Till we have built Jerusalem
> In England's green and pleasant land.

So ends Blake's 'Jerusalem', sung at the Labour election victory of 1945. Between that date and 1957, the shape of Britain's urban landscape had changed enormously, in large part due to the reforms of the Attlee government (New Towns Act, 1946; Town and Country Planning Act, 1947). Bombed-out areas of cities had been rebuilt wholesale; 'New Towns' had sprung up in rural areas – over a million new homes were built under the Labour government. The construction of council houses was continuing, though at a reduced rate, under the Tories. The Labour Party, in opposition, had just issued *Homes for the Future: A Socialist Policy for Housing* (London: Labour Party, 1956). But were the new towns and council estates a new Jerusalem, or merely another set of Satanic mills? This programme of town planning was strongly criticised from many quarters: the Architectural Review, in an issue entitled Outrage, and the art and architecture students who formed the 'Anti-Ugly' campaign, attacked the Philistinism of many new buildings.

At the same time, some on the Left deplored the failure to create genuine new urban centres. The Association of Building Technicians held a conference on 'Housing the City Dweller' in January 1957, where discussions centred on the regeneration of existing cities, against the concentration on New Towns. It was in this context that the two journals of the early New Left in Britain, the *Universities and Left Review* and the *New Reasoner* (soon to merge into the *New Left Review*) took up the issue of urban planning. Graeme Shankland opened the town planning debate in *ULR* with a quotation from D. H. Lawrence: 'The English are town birds through and through today, as the inevitable result of their complete industrialisation. Yet they don't know how to build a city, how to think of one, or how to live in one.' ('The Crisis in Town Planning', *ULR* 1, Spring 1957. All back issues of the *ULR* and *New Reasoner* are freely available on-line at **http://www.amielandmelburn.org.uk/archive_index.htm**). Lawrence, in the 1920s, had attacked vigorously the narrow-mindedness of 'the Englishman's home is his castle' and deplored the lack of a true civic spirit in Britain ('Nottingham and the Mining Country,' written 1929, in D. H. Lawrence, *Selected Essays*, Penguin, 1950). This strand was continued by those who criticised much of the new housing for being insufficiently urban and likely to lead to 'subtopia'. The 'Anti-Ugly' strand of criticism also found its place in *ULR*, with a set of photographs of new developments with comments attacking, for instance, the 'these castles for Englishmen at Bletchinton [which] float eloquently in their turgid sea of black asphalt.' ('The Crisis in Town Planning', *ULR* 2, Summer 1957).

To Shankland and Ralph Samuel, the concentration on New Towns was itself a shirking of the real issue: the existing 'dead centres'. These were more intractable, due to the number of pre-existing vested interests. Attlee's planners, constructing new Jerusalems in the countryside, had turned a blind eye to the Old Babylon of the capitalist city. Samuel argued: 'Public ownership of urban land sites is surely a minimum requirement of a socialist town planning policy.'

('Politics of town planning', Left notebook, *ULR* 2, Summer 1957). This criticism of the New Towns links up with the wider New Left criticism of the reformist policies of those years, which purported to believe that general prosperity could be achieved for Britain without actually confronting the entrenched interests of capital: welfare would be financed out of growth, not by any substantial redistribution of wealth (see, for instance, the anatomy of British capitalism *The Insiders* (*ULR* 3, Winter 1957), and the criticisms of Anthony Crosland's *The Future of Socialism*: e.g. Gordon Henderson, 'Can Capitalism Survive?', *ULR* 2, Summer 1957). Cutting across these debates around the aesthetics of town planning and the nature of the urban was another, sharper argument within the New Left over the contrast between the old, densely-packed working-class neighbourhoods and the more spacious but 'subtopian' planned developments to which many people were being transplanted. Here more than anywhere else, arguments about the shape of the city, about homes and lifestyles, were widening into arguments about the kind of people, the kind of society, then being created in Britain. Charles Taylor (the leftist Catholic philosopher) stressed the importance of the 'salvage' of existing communities over the creation of New Towns ('Alienation and Community', *ULR* 5, Autumn 1958) Citing the early classic of British sociology, Young and Wilmott's *Family and Kinship in East London,* Peter Worsley drew attention to the disruption of communities caused by relocation from 'slum' areas: 'From these slums, people are being removed as 'elementary' [i.e. nuclear] families on to new housing estates, where, despite physically superior conditions, they are often desperately lonely and lost without the relatives and friends who used to live around them. These are facts well-known to working-class people in their daily experience; they are not so well-known to the planners, architects and officials responsible for replacing, in their astounding ignorance, one set of miseries in the slums by another set in the new estates.' ('Britain – Unknown Country,' *New Reasoner* 5, Summer 1958).

In a study of the early years of two 'new towns', Harlow and Crawley, by Ellis Salomon, Janet Hayes and other members of the ULR Club, we get close to the actual texture of these changes in people's lives. In Harlow, Salomon noted the interesting fact that many new arrivals moved around the town quite often, 'trying to replace the friendships of their former environments' or 'searching for neighbours with whom they could be friends'. In both towns, the vast majority also said that they would prefer to move back to London, if they could get similar houses there. In the desire to move back to London and the search for new friendships we can see, perhaps, some of the frustrated desires which the new environment could not fulfil. The most common pattern, however, was towards a greater emphasis on the home, and home-centred activities such as gardening and television, rather than the neighbourhood. The typical comment of a working-class woman was: "I say, what do you have a good home for if not to stay there?" ('Impressions of Two New Towns', *ULR* 5, Autumn 1958).

In reports like these we can see the shift away from the communal modes of densely-packed working-class communities, to a more private style of living. When it came to evaluating these changes, however, the debate became more heated. In articles by Gordon Redfern and Stuart Hall, sensitivity to existing communities seemed in danger of tipping over into nostalgia for 'traditional working-class' areas and their attendant virtues. Richard Hoggart's *The Uses of Literacy* had given a picture of how the old way of life of working-class Leeds was now being eroded, in the 1950s, by the glossy new consumerism. Redfern and Hall now drew on this in attacking the new 'materialism' of the working class (Redfern, 'The Real Outrage' and Hall,

'A Sense of Classlessness', *ULR* 5, Autumn 1958). This drew a sharp rejoinder from Edward Thompson, who accused Redfern in particular of 'misusing' Hoggart's work, asking: 'What do we want the present generation of working people to fight for? We do not want to push them back into the old, cramped, claustrophobic community which was based on the grim equality of hardship. The aspiration towards community, if it arises in the present generation, will be far richer and more complex, with far more insistence on variety, freedom of movement, and freedom of choice, than in the old-style community…. I must confess to some impatience with this nostalgia for the "whole way of life" of the old working-class community….' For Thompson, the old pattern of living was not in fact a 'whole way of life', but in many ways a cramped and damaged way of life. When Redfern picked on the washing machine as evidence of working-class 'materialism', Thompson retorted hotly that this was 'not a symbol of "status" but a machine to wash clothes with. I do not know what moral and cultural values are attached to the kitchen sink, a washboard, and the week's wash for a family of five.' ('Commitment in Politics', *ULR* 6, Spring 1959).

In a similar spirit, John Harlow attacked 'sentimental town planners' who 'work out plans based on new neighbourhoods, multi-level corridor streets, mixed development, and social centres – all drawn from an outsider's view of cosy working class relationships which of course 'must not be disturbed'…. Thus they conservatively attempt to perpetuate the urban society which sprung from an environment created for peasants by naked capitalism!' The now more prosperous working class are aware of 'wider cultural opportunities…. They find that most of what was good in the old pattern of life is now being superseded, leaving only all that was worst – the taboos, petty lawlessness and social frustration – all of which are now without balance. Their aim is to escape this frustrating and irrelevant existence so admirably entrenched in slum and low cost housing.' And the 'New Town' had indeed given them 'a measure of social and cultural independence, but the price is isolation from all urban activity and the fragmentation of the family…. The family has exchanged the tense, personal, integrated space/time relationship of the slum, with its abominable physical environment, for the slack, impersonal and frustrating space/time relationships of the New Town with its incongruous ribbon and crescent environment mitigated only by sunlight and greenery.' ('One New Town', *ULR* 5, Autumn 1958).

In contrast to both the old 'slum' neighbourhood and the new 'subtopia', the New Left was trying to imagine what a genuine socialist city might look like. Again, D. H. Lawrence was central to their thinking. He had associated the old industrial village where he grew up less with working-class solidarity than with the narrow 'cottager' feeling of the English, as well as the ugliness of industrial capitalism. He had shown little enough nostalgia for 'The blackened brick dwellings, the black slate roofs glistening their sharp edges, the mud black with coaldust, the pavements wet and black' which he described in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. He went on: 'It was as if dismalness had soaked through and through everything. The utter negation of natural beauty, the utter negation of the gladness of life….' His own vision of the renewal of this landscape was bold and ruthless: 'Pull down my native village to the last brick. Plan a nucleus. Fix the focus. Make a handsome gesture of radiation from the focus. And then put up big buildings, handsome, that sweep to a civic centre. And furnish them with beauty…. Make a new England….' ('Nottingham and the Mining Country,' p. 122.) In this, 'the bigger gesture of the citizen, not the cottager', Lawrence envisaged a genuine civism superseding both the

narrow individualism of the suburban semi-detached and the warm but cramped solidarity of the old working-class neighbourhood. In the same spirit Raymond Williams, in 1958, wrote of 'the conversion of the defensive element of solidarity into the wider and more positive practice of neighbourhood.' (*Culture and Society*, Penguin, 1961 (orig. 1958), p. 320).

John Harlow, in his vision of 'One New Town', tried to translate such suggestions into concrete proposals. 'The object should be to create a truly urban town with the necessary high density and so reap the advantages of civilization, without at once organising it in such a way that tribal taboos and irrelevant social sanctions re-emerge; and further that freedom of association and activity is promoted. The basis of the New Town must therefore be the brotherhood of man, not fake precinct, neighbourhood or class solidarity.' The new town would be built to last, by a nationalised building industry; it would use craftsmanship but take advantage of new technologies. 'If we accept our new materials wholeheartedly there need be little maintenance to waste our future builders' time and energy. We could build ourselves a light, graceful, dust-free architecture using glass, plastics, concrete and metal alloys. Flexibility will arise inevitably from the use of small mass produced components assembled in a great variety of ways.' ('One New Town').

This vision, of a city or of a society, was never realised in those years. In the actual administration of social housing, as with other parts of the nationalised economy, the lack of democracy was all too clear. Raymond Williams noted later (1961): 'the way [council] houses and estates are commonly managed, by supposedly democratic authorities. I have seen letters to tenants from council housing officials that almost made my hair stand on end, and the arbitrary and illiberal regulation of many such estates is justly notorious.' (*The Long Revolution*, Parthian, 2011 (orig. 1961), p. 361). The failure of statist town planning and administration to achieve genuine democracy seems clear. Again, the wider social conclusion can be drawn from the experience of urban policy: supposedly open, democratic and egalitarian institutions were and are run in authoritarian ways. This failure accelerated the increasing privatisation of life and the appeal of consumerism: if the only significant unit was the family and its home (not the wider community), and if council estates meant only undemocratic regulation by rude officials, one can see the appeal of the 'right to buy'. From Mervyn Jones' criticism of Labour's 1959 election propaganda – 'Pride of place in the 'glossy' is given to Your Home' ('The Glossy Election', *New Reasoner* 8, Spring 1959) – one can draw a straight line to New Labour in the 1990s and the 'Conservatory Principle' ('no-one should be allowed to be leader of the Labour Party who does not understand the desire to own a conservatory': *The Purple Book*). It was on these new estates that the new 'mobile privatized' lifestyle Raymond Williams was to identify was being created on a mass scale (see my article on 'Mobile Privatization', *OLR* 7).

In such details of urban experience we can see the cultural underpinnings of the decline of the labour movement and the aggressively individualistic ethos of Thatcherism. Fabian social engineering, as represented by the Attlee government, had failed to construct a new Jerusalem, while the Old Babylon of the capitalist city continued to grow. In Britain we were left, in urban policy as in other areas of social thinking, with an apparent choice between two false alternatives: the prosperity and freedom of consumerism, or the drab egalitarianism of what passed for socialism; the new 'glossy' style of advertising, Labour's electioneering, and the 1951 Festival of Britain, versus 'the grim equality of hardship' of old-style working-class life,

the 'the hard, sharing world of the war' (Raymond Williams, 'Notes on Marxism in Britain since 1945', in *Culture and Materialism*, Verso, 2005; Edward Thompson, 'Commitment in Politics').

This knot in our thinking has yet to be untied: in struggles over urban space, it is still all too easy for existing working-class communities to conduct merely inward-looking, defensive battles, while the creativity of artists and architects is co-opted into capitalist projects of gentrification (cf. Luka Boeskens' 'Return of the Gentry' elsewhere in this issue of the *OLR*). Fabian social engineering has failed to construct new Jerusalems, while the Old Babylon of the capitalist city continues to reproduce itself. The vision of D. H. Lawrence, the plans of John Harlow, Graeme Shankland and the Association of Building Technicians, remain on paper.

As a final comment on this debate, and a contribution to the project of imagining better cities, and better societies, we might take a passage from Raymond Williams in 1983. Looking back to the communities that had once been the mainstay of socialism, he wrote: 'What strikes me most about those traditionally militant areas is that people were not forced to define themselves along any single dimension. True, they were – as was always said – employees or workers in a common situation. But they were also, and insisted on being, neighbours, interconnected by family. They were inhabitants of a particular place, often with a very strong local consciousness. There were non-contradictory relations between being working class and being socialist, or between being locally patriotic and the family relation meshing with it.' ('Problems of the Coming Period,' *New Left Review* I/140, July-August 1983).

Williams suggested, in other words, that it was not the homogeneous, levelled-down characteristics of these communities which gave them strength, but the extent to which – within such constraints – they could create fullness and variety in their social relationships. Different kinds of bonding came together into a mesh which was then strong enough to create a model of a genuinely alternative social order. In this way we can see the strength and potential of communities and social movements, not in terms of uniformity and simplicity, but in terms of the fullness, the variety and coherence of their common life. We still need to attend to this vision of what might lie beyond either the oppressive closeness of the Victorian slum and the privatised and fragmented society of the suburb. What we are now searching for is a principle of organisation which can allow such a strength – indeed, a greater strength – to be attained, without losing the flexibility and mobility which are the genuine gains of recent years. Imagining the urban – and perhaps also rural – forms this principle might take is crucial to the possibility of its realisation. It is in a sense the measure of our ability to make such ideas concrete.

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Burj Khalifa-Arabtec

L. B. Stanislaus

Žižek is right to advocate a journalistic strategy of appending "Foxconn" after every mention of "Apple" (e.g. "Apple-Foxconn Announces New Products to Fanfare")[1], intending a re-affirmation of the "upstream" labour that accompanies economic processes[2] in an industry that continues to stun and blind the world.

In an age of disavowal and division, we need to restate the necessity of such an affirmation in a perhaps more prosaic industry, construction. Why? The construction of urban spaces is one of the most ideologically entrenched productive processes, an intersection of labour conflicts, immigration, ecology, geography and politics, hidden under the vestments of symbolic beautification, nationalistic impulses (from the politics of infrastructure investment to nationalist grandeur), and cultural investments (think starchitects), all serving to justify a particular angle of economic analysis, all of this based on harsh material conditions. To argue this necessity, we turn to the world's tallest building, the Burj Khalifa in Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

"There was discussion amongst members of the jury that the existing 'Best Tall Building of the Year' award wasn't really appropriate for the Burj. We are talking about a building here that has changed the landscape of what is possible in architecture – a building that became internationally recognized as an icon long before it was even completed. 'Building of the Century' was thought a more apt title for it." -- Gordon Gill, Council on Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat (CTBUH) Awards Chair.[3]

In 2010, the Burj Khalifa was opened to much acclaim in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, the tallest man-made structure in the world at 829.8 meters. Later that year, it was awarded the CTBUH "Global Icon" award, an exceptional honour bestowed on examples of significant architecture, influential not only in building design, but urban planning and engineering as well.[4] It has been featured in a number of documentaries on prominent networks and has starred in the *Amazing Race 15* and *Mission: Impossible—Ghost Protocol*, broke seven world records at once,[5] and was launched to the heartening applause of 10,000 fireworks, 868 stroboscope lights and many other effects. On the tourism website, Trip Advisor, a rating averaged out of 2,847 reviews gives four and a half out of five, describing the experience as "fantastic", "incredible", gushing about the view from the observation deck, while complaints addressed ticketing problems and unfulfilled expectations.[6]

Just a year before its opening, the program BBC Panorama released an expose of the conditions of the largely-foreign workforce hired by Arabtec, the local contractors who executed the project. In Ben Anderson's fantastic piece of documentary reportage, reported in text by Lilla Allen,[7] we are provided a furtive glance into the conditions of the largely foreign labour force in Dubai, working on mega-projects like the Burj Khalifa. The details of exploitation, the miserable wages, the disgusting living conditions, can be found easily through this and other reports.[8]

What matters here is the manner in which such circumstances are hidden and the way they are rationalized away. While we must not think that bearing witness is enough, recognition is first necessary to keep the problems of labour and domination constantly at the front of our minds. We must resist the tendencies to understand social relations as purely economic exchanges and to view the world as ahistorical, constituted by its objects.

I.

In early 2009, Emirates Airline ran an advertising campaign portraying the success story of a 24 year old Indian construction worker, promoted after four years from a labourer to a supervisor of hoisting cranes. In these advertisements, he praises the living and working conditions of labourers in Dubai, which he sees as just, and happy for the opportunities his work has given him.[9] There is no need to search for a conspiracy here. While not related to Arabtec, this advertisement, following a month after the Panorama documentary, demonstrates the unfortunate fallacy that the success of a few justifies the system, by shifting its focus, the advertisement effectively silences any opposition.

This is but an extreme example of such a phenomenon. Most recently, when First Lady Michelle Obama took the stage at the Democratic National Convention,[10] she relied heavily on this rhetoric, drawing out examples from her own and President Obama's upbringing, "How hard you work matters more than how much you make." While the ends to which this device was used may differ, the political emphasis on persons and life histories in her speech relates closely to the choice of subject matter in the above campaign. Regardless of those ends, it is this strategy that needs reconsideration. To attribute success (or, indeed, failure) to a few causes is to largely ignore the complexities of social reality, where darker forces may tug against progress, and institutional cracks may misdirect even the most earnest of workers. From the rigor of political analysis, we are stuck in endless conspiracies, in which we are left without action.[11] Such a shift is indeed death for an effective Left, a shift analogous to the recalibration in strategy from radical structural change to compromise and centrist identification.

II.

A sales representative interviewed surreptitiously by the BBC reporter argued, regarding another property development, "It's much more difficult to earn some money in Pakistan or India, so people actually save by living for free in proper housing, eating for free in the canteen, using the transport and sending something to their families."[12] Setting aside the problem of her misinformation, we notice this argument of the lesser of two evils features prominently in debates on migrant labour and exploitation. Employers argue that in providing the workers with the opportunity to work, the latter ought to appreciate the opportunity, disregarding complications like debt, entrapment, precariousness and the other violations described by so many reports. This is obviously an impossible position. Such arguments mystify the complex relations between employer and employee, abstracting a falsely pure economic relation based on free choice. When they refer to the "free choice" the workers made to travel overseas to work, we must see only the myth of formal freedom. This freedom by itself is no freedom at all.

When we consider that these workers risk their lives to pay off their debts, to scrape together enough to send back in remittances, these arguments fall flat. In 2005, the Indian consulate counted 971 deaths of their citizens (they were told to stop counting soon after this statistic was revealed).[13] The tragedy of death reveals the emptiness of false rationalizations. Here, both the use of and the conclusions arrived with this argument fail upon examination. But when the violations are not so dramatic, as in developed nations, when these arguments become slightly believable, we must be even more doubtful. Even where there are protections for workers, the conditions of construction work remain dangerous and physical, and it is clear all workers are vulnerable to maltreatment. To exacerbate the situation, recourse available may not reach migrant workers (and maybe not even local ones), and still, in the most avowedly tolerant societies, there are always traces of chauvinism.[14] Of course, but the lesser of two evils! "Let us be frank about it: most of our people have never had it so good."[15] We note that the two fallacies above necessarily rely on a view of human relations as scientific objects to be rationalized and considered abstractly. The totality of life against which such arguments are made is ignored, or deprived of any significant content.

III.

When approached with such evidence, "Arabtec said it did not accept that there were unsanitary conditions at any of its camps' toilets. It blamed the workers, saying, despite training, their 'standards of cleanliness and hygiene are not up to your or our standards'...."[16] Such a disavowal amounts to the cunning tactic of "Yes, we've tried to help them, but they are incurably dirty! It is not our fault." On this level, it is unforgivable. But fundamentally, there is something more sinister at work. Trotsky observed something when, during the October Revolution, he noticed the quality of his soldiers close up. Deutscher writes: "During the civil war, and still more after it, Trotsky in his military speeches repeatedly complained that the Russian communist and Red Army man would sacrifice his life for the sake of the revolution sooner than clean his rifle or polish his boots. This paradox reflected the lack in the Russian people of those innumerable small habits of self-disciplined and civilized life with which Bolsheviks set out to build their new state, the proletarian democracy, in which 'every cook' should be able to perform the business of government. And this was perhaps the gravest of all the grave contradictions with which the revolution has to contend."[17]

Notice that Trotsky's exasperation stems from the same source as the Arabtec spokesman's finger-pointing. What, indeed, should our attitude be when faced with this problem, when the people do not live up to expectations? When the people fail to coincide with the People? In the former case, it is a matter of some "enlightened" businessman trying to civilize his workers. In the latter, it is a question of the revolutionary's attitude towards the people: "Are they ready for revolution?" The conservative attitude would be this: we have tried our best, but something innate in these workers makes our efforts unsuccessful. They sabotage us by their barbarity, they are who they are, that is human nature. Sound familiar? This same attitude belies criticism of Communism as Utopian, pointing to the Soviet Union, to North Korea, to China, the failures of the great Communist projects of the 20th Century. They failed, of course, because human nature does not work with Communism, because human nature, innate and immovable, will never change that much!

To this we must juxtapose the even more insidious train of thought of some liberal-minded people today. Of course, they say, there is no such thing as *a* human nature, there is instead a whole world of different human natures, and to impose any sort of standard is imperialism, colonialism, hegemonic interference with indigenous lives that we are in no position to judge. Clearly, for example, the Chinese cannot function within a democracy, their capitalism with Asian values is more suited to their history, their temperament, their nature, and to judge them by some Western (and necessarily ethnocentric) standard is unforgivable. And if we do judge them, and they do fail, it is because of some innate trait. This conclusion is but a small step away from the original idea. In fact, we can see that the Arabtec position above is the mixture of both these attitudes. We must return to the analysis of labour relations and conflict, to the gaps between worlds where millions of workers barely survive in slums and to the masses in every city's backyard, because we have lost sight of the nature of Capital in our hasty search for a quick-fix, ethical capitalism, left with a false, empty human subject.

IV.

If we have strayed somewhat from construction labour, it is because the issues it raises demonstrate not only the relevance of Leftist thought, but also the necessity of renewal against the dominant political doctrines of the day in the entire social field. One more note on the prevailing attitude towards the world. When we see the pyramids of Egypt, we can never shake off the feeling that there is truth to the idea that aliens had a hand in building them. When we see the statues of Easter Island, the stones of the Stonehenge, the snaking Great Wall of China, we are in awe. No number of documentaries, of monographs and studies can truly convince us that they were built entirely out of human labour.

Is that not the attitude that we have towards the world today? When the Burj Khalifa was unveiled, when tourists pay almost a $100 US to reach a balcony for a view, when we see Tom Cruise scale the side of the building, we are only aware of its monumentality. We are in awe. And except for a few professionals, the majority of us will never understand how these buildings, like those of the great past civilizations, were constructed.[18] On a different level, but with the same phenomenon, we approach the latest iPhone from Apple-Foxconn, and we see only the surface, the intuitive magic so characteristic of Apple-Foxconn. Most of us will never know how such a device, so ubiquitous in richer societies, works.[19] We are in an age of opacity, an ahistorical world of objects that seem to have always been there, as if by magic On the largest to the smallest scale, the opacity of today's technological innovation and productive processes force us into subservience. They point to the buildings, to the technology and ask, "Do you think any other form of social relations can produce these great examples of human ingenuity?" We are forced to shake our heads, mute. And when we shake our heads here, we are tempted to do the same with the financial complexities that riddle our economy. Surely, there is no other way to ensure the functioning of our global economy! We are left mute, and the Left becomes increasingly impotent, failing to notice that things as they are do not appear *out of the blue*, but are the result of political struggles.

Against this, we place ourselves in the position of witnesses. The world as it is must be recognized as historical and contingent. Complexity is today's fetishism, it forces us to live in the world without grasping at it's true reality. We live in a world of opaque objects, not because

information is withheld, but because we do not know what to do with the constant stream of meaningless data. No longer. We place ourselves in a position to see objects as part of the social reality, *our social reality*, something that can be changed, that can be altered. The End of History is still far away, there is still work to be done; the information is there, we just need to know what to do with it.

We live in a constructed space, we will continue living in constructed spaces, spaces that will need expansion and renewal. For as long as society maintains itself, limping along, monuments and mega-projects will be raised, maintained by more and more disenfranchised workers.[20] The issues here are important on a number of different levels, what we have attempted here is merely the first step in identifying the significance of certain actions which rationalize the labour conditions in Dubai.[21] Burj Khalifa-Arabtec is not merely a strategy of resistance that aims at the sorry goal of "raising awareness". It is a statement of all of the above significations and intricacies, a recognition that there is a totality when we might be tempted to see only objects, only pure processes. Burj Khalifa-Arabtec is a re-affirmation of the productive process that underlies everything in our constructed world, it is to realize that contradictions in every industry raise the necessary questions of ideology, dishonesty, disavowal and renewal. Burj Khalifa-Arabtec forces us to confront the conditions of our constructed lives, so that we may better agitate among a renewed peoples, a renewed subjectivity, a renewed project of social relations. So we can see beyond the objects, and by doing so, remake the objects for ourselves and a new world.

L.B. Stanislaus

1   Žižek at Cafe Oto, "History is made at night: 24-hour event to launch Less than Nothing."
2   That is, behind every product is a whole series of production that relies on productive labour, which, due to the arrangment of said production, manages to obfuscate the origins of the final good. Although Žižek maintains that the radical role of Marxism is not just exposing the labour that goes into production, this first step in critique is stated explicitly against those who would praise the "virtual economy" catalyzed by technology without recognizing the role of exploitation in the production of technology in the first place.
3   "Burj Khalifa honored as first recipient of CTBUH's new Tall Building "Global Icon" Award." Council of Tall Buildings and Urban Habitats. n.p., 25 Oct 2010. Web. 9 Sept. 2012. <http://www.ctbuh.org/Events/Awards/2010Awards/2010AwardsDinner/tabid/1710/language/en-US/Default.aspx >
4   "Burj Khalifa honored as first recipient..."
5   "Facts & Figures." Burj Khalifa. n.p., n.d. Web. 10 Sept. 2012. <http://www.arabianbusiness.com/burj-dubai-ceremony-details-revealed-27446.html >
6   "Burj Khalifa." tripadvisor.co.uk. n.p., n.d. Web. 9 Sept. 2012. <http://www.tripadvisor.co.uk/Attraction_Review-g295424-d676922-Reviews-Burj_Khalifa-Dubai_Emirate_of_Dubai.html>
7   Allen, Lilla. "Dark side of the Dubai dream." BBC News Magazine, 6 April 2009. Web. 9 Sept 2012.
8   "Building Towers, Cheating Workers." Human Rights Watch, 12 Nov. 2006. Web. 10 Sept. 2012. <http://www.hrw.org/en/reports/2006/11/11/building-towers-cheating-workers >. Also, see resources linked at <http://www.migrant-rights.org/2010/01/04/behind-the-glamorous-facade-of-the-burj-khalifa/ >
9   Billing, Soren. "Emirates campaign highlights 'lucky' labourer." *Arabian Business*, 20 May 2009. Web. 10 Sept. 2012. <http://www.arabianbusiness.com/emirates-campaign-highlights-lucky-labourer-18221.html >
10   Pace, Julie. "Michelle Obama DNC Speech Electrifies Crowd." *Huffington Post*, 4 Sept. 2012. Web. 9 Sept. 2012. <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/09/04/michelle-obama-dnc-speech_n_1856347.html >
11   If, for example, we attribute the failure of people today to participate in politics proper to the

manipulation of the media by capitalists, bankers and people like Murdoch, we are committing the same error. "Just as a people that exploits another cannot be free, so a class that uses an ideology is its captive too". Althusser, Louis. *For Marx*. London: Verso, 2005. Print. p. 201.

12   Allen, Lilla. "Dark side of the Dubai dream."

13   Hari, Johann. "The dark side of Dubai." *The Independent*, 7 April 2009. Web. 9 Sept. 2012. <http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/commentators/johann-hari/the-dark-side-of-dubai-1664368.html >

14   See the challenges to migrant construction workers as described by the British government, <http://www.hse.gov.uk/migrantworkers/construction.htm >

15   Quote by Harold Macmillan.

16   Allen, Lilla. "Dark side of the Dubai dream."

17   Deutscher, Isaac. *The Prophet Armed*: Trotsky 1879-1921. London: Verso, 2003. Print. p. 266

18   Either we are ignorant, or we are faced with a deluge of technical information and innovations that, while impressive, offer us little by way of the total cost and effort of construction. So that, Ben Anderson's documentary is closer to the truth of construction, against the sterile technological focus of other documentaries.

19   This does not suggest that it is an impossibility. Rather, it is the existing trend for a majority.

20   Fundamentally, we have to ask, in an emancipated society, what form of construction will exist? How will the economy be arranged so that necessary work will be done? Especially in an increasingly unstable world, how will we intervene in urban spaces to help us counter threats from climate change, etc., without regressing to slavery and more oppression?

21   See "Interlude 3: Architectural Parallax" in Žižek, Slavoj. *Living in the End Times*. London: Verso, 2010. Print.

OCCUPY ~~BERLIN~~ BUNDESTAG

Frederike Kaltheuner

Berlin and Occupy seem to be a perfect match, at least if we accept the city's self-image as an indicator: it presents itself as the unofficial capital of vegans, penniless artists busy working on "projects," or simply "poor but sexy" as Mayor Wowereit declared in 2003.

Why, one wonders, has the Occupy movement failed so epically in gaining momentum in Germany's capital? As early as October 2011 Thomas Straubhaar, the Swiss economist and director of the Hamburg World Economic Institute, argued that the movement's famous slogan – "we are the 99 percent" – was inappropriate for the German economic context, making it very unlikely that Occupy Germany could become a popular movement comparable to the US. Since Germany is blessed with a comprehensive welfare state, relatively low unemployment and a low inflation rate, Straubhaar suggested there was no German "99 percent" that could potentially unite against a wealthy and powerful minority.

On October 15, 2011, the day of the first large-scale demonstrations in Germany, this material analysis was proved wrong. On sunny Alexanderplatz in central Berlin, I found myself part of a very diverse crowd of demonstrators: elderly pensioner couples, families with pre-packed sandwiches and tea, smart men in suits, hipsters, naked hippies, radical leftist groups and a large number of very normal-looking people. Two weeks later the magazine Focus reported that 87% of all Germans questioned could relate to the global protestors' resentment. What was it that this vast majority of people could agree on?

Even though the Occupy Wall Street movement has been repeatedly criticized for its lack of a clear political agenda, the name itself actually suggests two very simple and straightforward sentiments: a profound dissatisfaction with the financial sector, and the demand for more democratic control. The same applies to the "99 percent" signifier. While the number clearly refers to income inequality in the US, it is as much a prescriptive statement as it is a descriptive analysis. Even though 99 percent of Americans share a similar position with regard to income distribution, the recent presidential elections have illustrated once again that no political agenda can be automatically derived from that shared material agenda. Even if 99 percent of all Americans are similar in this one respect, the life of an indebted college graduate student, for instance, is structurally very different to that of a working-class single mother. Rather than being an economic analysis, "We are the 99 percent" is a demand to unite, despite our differences; the vast majority of people who do not benefit from financial capitalism against those who do. In fact, Occupy Berlin initially felt much more like a strategic alliance between various socio-economic groups than a coherent movement united by material economic conditions.

Once the almost carnivalesque crowd had found its way to the Kanzleramt (where Mrs. Merkel resides), however, this initial feeling of sharing a limited but significant political agenda faded away as quickly as it had emerged. The people around me, at least, managed to ignore aonewoman's ten-minute speech about her community's fight against an underground CO_2 stor-

age unit in Brandenburg, and why the 99 percent should be, or rather were, on her side. But a strange feeling of discomfort began to spread when an ambitious "sexy but poor" artist advertised his personal website – notably through the human mic. "Occupy Berlin" was admittedly already ambiguous, as the lowest common denominator among the 99 percent was dissatisfaction with the financial system (Wall Street or Frankfurt) rather than the entire German political system (Berlin): one anarchist group re-interpreted it further, and turned it into "Occupy Parliament" by setting up camp in front of the Bundestag, the German Parliament building.

I am not against radical political demands in principle, and although I do not identify as an anarchist, I believe that anarchism constitutes a legitimate political belief. However the problem of the very first Occupy Berlin protest was its inability to maintain a universal political agenda, which could nonetheless be shared by the various particular social groups involved. The beauty of the original assembly at Alexanderplatz lay in the fact that very different individuals could not only relate to that vague feeling of dissatisfaction with the financial system, but also felt obliged to go out and express their dissent.

In the late afternoon, most of the ordinary-looking people had disappeared: some at least, I believe, bewildered by what they found themselves demonstrating for. Once a movement has gained momentum, concrete solutions have to be developed; finding more concrete solutions that involve not only 99 but even 100 percent of the population is a painful, tiring and slow process. Occupy Berlin could not even reach that point because specific interests tried to monopolize what had begun as a near-universal protest, under their particular agendas. Only when I walked home did I realize that I had not attended a protest. Rather, it was me, along with all the other disappointed participants who had originally constituted the very protest we ended up disagreeing with.

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INSIDE THE OCCUPATION OF CHICAGO: AN INTERVIEW WITH TREVOR WARREN GRIFFITH

zach parton

The broad international left movement against corporate interests known as "Occupy" has seen different manifestations across the world. The core of the Occupy movement was solidified by an heuristic approach to organization. Beginning with an idea in the samizdat *Adbusters* and the help of the on-line activist group Anonymous, the first embers of the movement staking out the financial centres in New York began to glow in mid-September 2011.[1] In fifteen hundred cities across the world[2], peripheral contractions felt from the Arab Spring again soon twitched with a hope for rising against entrenched tyranny.

The Occupy movement has no central dogma, leadership or manifesto. Outside of principles adopted by local movements through a "people's assembly"[3] the global idea behind Occupy has been to shake peoples' minds free from complacency regarding corporate consumerism.

An impressive manifestation of this movement can be found in Chicago, Illinois, USA, a city with a tumultuous history. Chicago streets have witnessed everything from the Haymarket Affair in 1886, to a protest against the Iraq War in 2003 that saw hundreds of arrests, to the crowd gathered to watch the acceptance speech of Barak Obama in 2008. In contrast to the violence of the past, Occupy Chicago has avowed non-violent and democratic principles. Using *Robert's Rules*[4] as a guide, Occupy Chicago has held, and continues to hold impressive 'General Assemblies' where democratic decisions are made about the future and voice of the movement.

A third year student at Shimer College in Chicago, Trevor Warren Griffith has been significantly involved in some of the organizing, planning and implementation of the ideas forming Occupy Chicago.

Interviewer (zach parton): I would like to begin by asking you what you feel exactly Occupy Chicago is?

Trevor Warren Griffith: Occupy Chicago is a name given to a coalition of politically autonomous individuals concerned with highlighting and/or drawing attention to corporate influence in American politics. Particularly, situations that involve privatisation of health care, housing needs, and education in the city of Chicago. The organization also aims at highlighting other Chicago specific problems such as poverty on the South Side and police violence.

Interviewer: How did Occupy Chicago find its start, its roots?

Griffith: On 17 September 2011, Occupy Wall Street began their occupation in New York City (USA). On 23 September, a group of individuals in Chicago thought it would be a good idea to follow their example and set up an occupation of the West Jackson Boulevard and South LaSalle Street intersection where the Chicago Board of Trade, Bank of America headquarters, and the Federal Reserve buildings are located. Since then we have migrated to various location across the city. We have a base in Cermak[5], and hold our General Assemblies at Congress and Michigan.[6]

Asking how it got started is kind of a complicated question, because in a certain sense it got started with Occupy Wall St. In another sense, it's been going on throughout the entire history of Chicago. There have always been left movements that have been resisting racist or classist forces that operate in Chicago politics.

Interviewer: Do you feel that Chicago is particularly primed for this kind of movement?

Griffith: I think we have done well. As I said, there is a history of resistance. The 1968 Democratic National Convention occurred in Chicago and was a windfall event in American Left politics. There are also the Unions, who have a huge influence in Chicago, more so than almost any other city in the United States.

In that sense, we had it much easier than other places. There are other places that had it easier than we did of course. Chicago is very cold [in the winter], making it very hard to have an encampment, a significantly complicating issue. Also, because Union influence is so heavy, we've had to sort of tailor what we do and how we do it to incorporate those interests. It isn't a bad thing, but is definitely unique to Chicago.

Interviewer: I am very interested in what role you played in the coming-to-be of Occupy Chicago.

Griffith: I took train over to New York when Occupy Wall St. started. I stayed there over the weekend, and saw a couple very small things, very little overall. Getting off the train from New York to Chicago and walking to class, I walked past Jackson and La-Salle. I saw a bunch of folks outside holding signs saying 'We are the 99%.' This was immediately intriguing to me.

A few days later I went down there. Occupy Chicago had already been running for a little while. They were, at the time, struggling to get their General Assembly organized. It is a very hard thing to do. I walked up to someone who appeared to know what was going on, and asked them how I could help. They told me to come to the General Assembly. I had plans of attending, but I received a call from a friend. They advised me that the General Assembly had kind of been a 'shit-show' lately, and there was a group meeting trying to figure ways to work the problems out. I went over to my friend's house, and ended up hooking up with some very cool, fairly radical folks who were trying to work out the organization issues in a properly democratic manner.

We worked for a couple weeks drafting the constitution for the General Assembly. A very rough draft had already been ratified during the first days of Occupy Chicago. The time we spent was well rewarded, we got it up and running and it runs pretty smoothly now. It has allowed for some excellent and decisive decisions.

Interviewer: What were some major challenges faced when drafting the constitution?

Griffith: The issues concerning the drafting of the constitution were not really exciting. People did not tend to get too fiery. The major issues as I saw them were twofold: The first was taking everything into account. There had to be protocol for a wide array of instances and problems. The second major challenge was how to structure the General Assemblies such that it kept everyone included. We had to keep meetings bearable, and timely. It was apparent the General Assemblies could not regularly last seven hours, as some had.

We had to make sure that people were actually getting their voices heard. At the same time we had to protect against people or groups dominating the dialogue or shutting other groups down. This is very hard to keep in balance, especially when you consider that every action the organization takes is very particular, with very particular problems. Two very apparent problems are police presence when doing things like trying to set up an encampment, and the general distrust and mania caused by having to handle money. I like to think we got the process running fairly smoothly.

Interviewer: I assume this smooth running is a result of the scaffolding provided by the constitution. What are some of its particulars?

Griffith: As you may know, any type of consensus is very hard to reach. Occupy Chicago does not work under a properly consensus format. We decide through a nine-tenths majority, in contrast to Occupy Wall St. which operates under one hundred percent consensus.

Personally, I prefer a complete consensus, but when I came to the movement, the nine-tenths had already been ratified. The people working on the constitution did not see is as their job as to change what had been done, but to make it effective. Most people in Occupy Chicago thought that a complete consensus asks too much, especially when considering things like resource allocation, arrest records [when deciding resistance] and prison solidarity. All of these things involve really fiery opinions, and however one is to proceed, it is clear that some protocol is needed.

One of the major influences on the constitution was Robert's Rules. It is a rulebook for parliamentary proceedings. I had seen it used at my school, Shimer College: it's about the closest thing to a democratically run college that I know of in the United States. The assembly system allows students and faculty to engage together even beyond what the seminar class structure allows. Robert's Rules and the Assembly allow the college to operate through a variety of committees.

Occupy Chicago didn't follow Robert's Rules directly, but it had helpful suggestions. For Occupy Chicago, the book provided a means of allowing one person to speak at a time, various

signs that audience members could hold up to prompt an immediate response to a speaker, and a stack to line speakers up in a coherent order.

The whole process was kind of lengthy, but we got the kinks worked out. We developed a protocol so that opinions could be heard, and things could be considered at least somewhat soberly.

Interviewer: What do you feel is the relationship of the General Assembly of Occupy Chicago to community at large?

Griffith: The General Assembly is a way of unifying the community. It allows for broad organization and decision-making which would be impossible without some structured proceedings. The General Assembly is not a governing body. The idea of the nine-tenths majority is that serious dissent will be addressed to the point that it is no longer truly dissent, while allowing the dissenting point to be made in full.

The General Assembly does not have the authority to disband or rebuke the community or Committees. Any Committee may present as a committee at the General Assembly on what they are doing, trying to do, or have observed. The General Assembly can then decide to adopt an action or position as their own. For example, the Housing Committee found a bunch of places to be possible organizing centres for the movement. The Committee came to the General Assembly and presented these possibilities in order to allow for Occupy Chicago as a whole to decide where they were going.

Interviewer: Could you detail what exactly 'Committees' are and how they work?

Griffith: It's extremely hard when there are three or four hundred people organizing disparate things. In this spirit, particular jobs must be allocated to particular groups of people. The Committees at Occupy Chicago are set up as functional autonomous groups that anyone can join. Each is designed with a specific aim in mind. This includes, as I mentioned was finding locations to house people and the General Assembly. We also have committees dedicated to Arts and Recreation, who are charged with the production of signs and other displays. There is a Mental Health and Wellness Committee, which is fairly self-explanatory, just making sure the community as a whole is doing well. And there are, of course, many others. Something like twenty or thirty total.

Interviewer: Has Occupy Chicago continued with that same form of General Assembly outlined by the Constitution?

Griffith: As evidenced by my being here in Oxford, things very well may have changed without my knowing. I have seen some significant changes, such as a small break period being added, which was very necessary; people need to take a break and relax after four or five hours of the democratic process. We had been using the "people's mic"[7] as a standard at General Assemblies, but we dropped this later on in favour of a Public Address System that was purchased. That effectively cuts the time for General Assemblies in half. As far as I know, the "people's mic" is still used in issues requiring spontaneous organization.

Interviewer: Thank you for the detailed account. Beyond the involvement with drafting the Constitution, you also had a particular role in organizing movements and actions, is that correct?

Griffith: Yes, outside the drafting, I was a part of the Internal Coordination Committee, which saw that all the various committees of Occupy Chicago had what they needed, were aware of what the other committees were doing, and were effectively communicating what they themselves were up to.

When you have so many particular projects going on, it really helps to have some general coordination. We were the primary moderators between the Committee groups of two to three hundred people. Personally I didn't do anything flashy or exciting, no media work or interviews. I was just part of the team that kept things together. This Committee was extremely important during actions like our attempt to set up encampment at Grant Park.[8]

Interviewer: Besides finding an encampment, what have been some of the other goals of the movement?

Griffith: Currently, there are no goals to find a permanent encampment. Chicago, as I had mentioned, is different from other Occupy locations in that the winter will literally kill those who spend too long outside. The encampment is an idea, a dream really, but one I do not find very realistic. We have a permanent space in Cermak, and it suits our needs well.

Overall, Occupy Chicago has been focused on the things I mentioned at the beginning of the interview, mobilizing people for things that truly impact them, and setting up alternative structures to the oppressive ones in existence. There was a strong presence from Occupy Chicago at both the NATO protests and the Chicago Teacher Union's strike recent strike.[9]

Interviewer: What are the initiatives Occupy Chicago is currently working with?

Griffith: That is extremely hard for a single person to say. I urge interested parties to check out the website.[10] As I mentioned, there was a lot of organizing around the CPS strike and the NATO summit. Beyond that, I know recently there has been an attempt to address some serious issues with the privatization of education and health care that have been coming to a head in Chicago.

Interviewer: Looking more broadly at the work you have done, what are some of the logistic issues of a non-centralized and leaderless movement? It must be difficult to have any sort of single positive action or accounts coming out of so many autonomous groups, even if they are coming together for a single cause.

Griffith: It's interesting. Most questions with regards to leadership or centralization anywhere actually come down to communication. Organizing actually has little to do with 'leadership' itself. Most of the people involved with Occupy Chicago are very passionate, very talented folks who know how to get done what they are good at getting done. With few excep-

tions, they work very well together.

The problem is, when you have that many people, who live busy lives and who are trying to do something that is pretty difficult to do, it is easy for communication to simply collapse. Therefore, any level of involvement in organizing within a leaderless movement involves being in constant communication with the people you are organizing with. This means sometimes even talking to the Arts and Recreation Committee, doubling up on making sure they are clued in to what is going on, even if they have nothing direct to do with the current action.

The people I have seen who are best at organizing are those who really have the interests of the other Occupiers at heart whenever they set about doing something. I mentioned that the General Assembly is not a governing body, but I think in some Occupations it has become such. I see that manifestation as a less than healthy institution, capable of exercising authority over individuals. We were pretty careful not to let that happen at Occupy Chicago.

Logistics and organizing are interesting points, considering we are talking about a bunch of volunteers. Anyone can walk away at any time. No one has authority. If anyone would be called a 'leader' it's those who are best at what they do, and are the most passionate and considerate.

[At this point, Courtney Carson, an associate of Mr Griffith's, present at the interview, raised a point] **Carson:** The Zapatistas have a quote, 'The best leader is the one who obeys.' I feel that with the General Assembly, I hear that a lot. With the emphasis on communication and explanation, when anyone takes on a 'leadership' role, they are definitely obeying those around them.

Interviewer: Trevor, what kinds of things have you learned about horizontally structured organizations? Do you find this methodology promising? What would you say if you could give a bit of advice to other organizers?

Griffith: Horizontal organizing is very challenging. I think the reason behind that is that the entire world around us, particularly in the United States, is antithetical to horizontal organization. The central values consumer American culture upholds are very hostile to equality, particularly with respect to power structures. In terms of horizontal organization's value to the left, I don't feel there can be any question about that. If it is a massive cultural trend that we are fighting, the organization of our groups, actions, and lives according to values that are in some sense antithetical to the norm seem the most natural thing in the world. To other organizers; never get disheartened. It is very much a process of trial and error. Although there have been some killer examples of it in the past, horizontal organizing is still on working bench.

Interviewer: Where is it that you see the future of Occupy Chicago trending towards?

Griffith: I really don't feel that I have any authority or insight to say where Occupy Chicago is heading. I can say what I would like to see from it. I would be pleased if there was a focus on smaller food and clothing drives, and utilities advocacy. It would be great if systems of alternative education could be set up that fought Rahm Emmanuel's attempt at privatizing all of Chicago public schools.

In Chicago, but also globally, I think the Occupy movement has changed the nature of the conversations. There has been a re-centring of political dialogue around financial and class issues that not long ago were far from mainstream consciousness. I think the movement would do well to begin to work, much as the Black Panthers did in the United States, on alleviating the material struggles of those the movement focuses on. I really do hope that Occupy helps to lay the grounding for serious structural change.

Trevor Warren Griffith and zach parton are both in their third year at Shimer College, Chicago, and currently in Oxford through the Oxford Study Abroad Programme.

1   Flemming, Andrew. "Adbusters sparks Wall Street protest." The Vancouver Courier, September 27, 2011. Accessed November, 2012. http://www.vancourier.com/Adbusters+sparks+Wall+Street+protest/5466332/story.html.

2   Occupy Wall Street "About." Last Accessed: 10 November, 2012, "http://occupywallst.org/about/"

3   Ibid.

4   Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised, De Capo Press, In Eleventh Edition (2011)

5   Cermak Road, Chicago, Illinois, USA

6   Corner of Congress and Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois, USA

7   The people's mic is a process whereby a speaker's statement is "mic'ed" (spoken close to a yell) by immediately proximate members of the audience in order for the wider audience to hear them (the speaker).

8   Grant Park, Corner of West Congress Parkway and South Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois, USA. Occupy Chicago attempted to set up a permanent encampment here twice, 15 and 22 October 2011. These attempts resulted in approximately three hundred fifty arrests, including Mr. Griffith. His case, as all others, has been closed.

9   NATO held their Security Summit in Chicago this summer (2012). CPS Teachers were on strike at the beginning of the 2012 School year.

10   Occupy Chicago website: http://occupychi.org/

WHY OUR STUDENT UNION NEEDS TO BE POLITICAL

Emily Cousens

Broadly speaking, the role of a student union is to represent the general interests of the students within a particular institution. However, what do we actually expect of our student union and why is OUSU (the Oxford University Student Union) the joint worst in the country?[1] I will argue that politics is an important part of all student unions but in fact – given the disconnected structure of Oxford's representative bodies – politics is crucially important to the relevance of OUSU in particular.

At the beginning of this term, just before the excitement of freshers' week among nervous newbies and well-rested returning students, National Student Survey (NSS) data was released that showed that our student union was rated the joint worst in the country. The ranking itself is not worth dwelling on for too long: Oxford's collegiate structure gives the student union a different relevance to that of other universities where the student union is a central social and political body. Cambridge's union only ranked 6 places above Oxford's and Durham's, the union of another collegiate university only 17 places above that – still failing to sit among the top 100 institutions. This raises the question: what form of representation should our student union provide?

The functions of a traditional student union are split in Oxford. JCRs and MCRs deal with the day-to-day resolution of smaller issues within a college and the social and entertainment side. The Oxford Union currently takes a chunk of the political role and benefits from a lot of the financial support that might go to an ordinary student union; this allow it to provide social events, as well as offering a cheap bar. OUSU is then seen to take on the less exciting roles of student welfare and minority representation; and most students pass their three years at Oxford without having any contact with it.

Clearly, however, there are two problems here. Firstly, these less exciting roles are in fact very important. The role of minority representation for example is vital, especially in an institution as traditional and conservative as Oxford University. Jess Pumphrey's tireless efforts last year culminating in the de-gendering of subfusc shows the vital role the institution can play, even if this is for a minority of people.[2] Secondly, the idea that many students hold – that the political functions of a student union are served by the Oxford Union while OUSU is just full of politically-correct bureaucrats – worryingly reinforces OUSU's perceived irrelevance. Moreover, the Oxford Union has an extortionate membership fee of £229 – way beyond the means of most hard-pressed students – and its committee positions tend to be dominated by students from privileged, conservative and private-school backgrounds. This is compounded by the fact that many JCRs refuse to endorse 'political motions': for the majority of students, political representation is only achievable through OUSU.

In fact, at the time of OUSU's official recognition less than 40 years ago, senior university

members were so worried about its political potential that giving the central student body its own building was deemed to entail a risk of inciting political activism. The reluctance of the university staff to grant this led to sit-ins in Exam Schools.[3] Clearly, the body has a thoroughly political history, and in 1974 was seen as hugely important to students. Yet now the institution is perceived by some to be so wilfully unrepresentative that Trinity College JCR and a number of MCRs are disaffiliated from it.

Whilst OUSU's relevance is declining, the importance of students in politics is increasing. The last four decades saw the numbers of students in higher education expand enormously from 1.7 million in 1971 to 3.5 million in 2009, meaning that students now represent a large and distinct force within society. Furthermore, the importance of this expansion is in its opening up of higher education to a broader range of backgrounds. It is no longer the case that university is the preserve of the elite: while examples such as the Bullingdon Club photo and Sutton Trust findings that students from private schools are 55 times more likely to get a place at Oxford than state school students who receive free school meals[4] do little to support arguments that Oxford is now anti-elitist, there is no doubt that since the Student Union was officially recognised in 1974, there has been a increase in the breadth of student voices that require representation.

On top of this, students are among the best placed in society for political engagement. Students find themselves at a transitional point in society, between childhood and full incorporation into the world of work. They are less constrained than workers by routine, bureaucracy or financial responsibility and are less affected by demoralizing experiences and far more likely to assert that another world is possible. This enables students to be astute in making connections between struggles and to generalise from immediate experience to big political questions. Often their hopes are dashed by an overbearing neoliberal orthodoxy, especially in economics and social sciences, but there is still far more space for such aspirations at universities than in the wider society. The student movement in Britain has highlighted this, from the prevalence of Palestinian flags at anti-fees demonstrations, the adoption of the red square symbol of the Quebec student movement CLASSE, or the naturalness with which demonstrators marched to the Egyptian Embassy following the London demonstration in January, linking the struggle against austerity with the struggle against Mubarak. A student union should support and enable this political and intellectual development and be a place where people can come together and find resources that will help them campaign, and one that informs and educates people.

Yet in many ways OUSU is travelling in the opposite direction to students themselves. Political activism has persisted across Oxford over the last few years; from the occupation of the Clarendon building to protest the actions of the Israel military in Gaza in 2009, to large demonstrations against the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills, Vince Cable, in October 2010 and Minister for Universities and Science David Willetts on 9th November 2012. In wider student activism Oxford also fares well, with a strong presence in the national Education Activist Network.

One of the key problems with OUSU lies in its view of representation. Instead of recognising the issues that students are involved in, representation is seen as being simply mediation between students and university management. Funds and facilities that might be used for

campaigning on both local and national issues are rarely harnessed, and OUSU's £2000 discretionary fund often remains untouched at the end of each presidency. Local issues such the existence of the Campsfield detention centre for asylum-seekers just a few miles from the centre of Oxford, and the treatment of migrants who are kept there; the University's investment in weapons manufactures and dealers; and international issues such as Palestine solidarity are ignored by OUSU for much of the time. The link between such political apathy and student engagement is evident from the fact that Sheffield Student Union – ranked as the top university Student Union in the recent survey – is willing to be political; it recently passed a motion to support BDS (Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions against Israel).[5] When student unions attempt to situate themselves in the political activism of the wider university then they become popular and democratic institutions.

This is ignored by candidates running for sabbatical positions in OUSU. Professionalism triumphs over political engagement. Even if a more politically engaged student is elected to a sabbatical position, they can expect to be faced with endless bureaucracy, cost constraints and only 24 weeks of term during their tenure: an impossible situation in which to try to transform an institution. It is hardly surprising then that voter turnout for OUSU elections is so low: last year's poor result of less than one in five students voting was hailed as a relative triumph.

OUSU has moved from its strong popular origins to become a distant, faceless service provider for students. Much of its work is focussed on providing student support, rather than representing students against the university authorities. The notion of enhancing or protecting the 'student experience' has overshadowed any opportunity for meaningful change. This even extends to a situation of pitting students against staff: celebrating the 'best lecturers' through lecturer of the year awards, which effectively encouraging students to choose between the good and the bad and distinguish who is providing a better service for the student consumers.

The culture of OUSU has thus shifted from being a representative body to a service provider and manager. Depoliticisation and commercialisation have led to the importance of the OUSU 'brand image'. OUSU endorses certain club nights, sells 'stash' and has recently rebranded its website to make its service more visibly attractive to students – despite the fact that nothing has changed in the day-to-day bureaucracy.

OUSU needs to re-think the way it works if it is going to ever be relevant to the student body beyond the cliques of insiders and managerial careerists who attend OUSU council. Intervening in an election on a political basis and proposing motions in support of strikes or demonstrations can go some way to breaking the ice of depoliticisation. Such interventions can also inspire and engage a larger audience, polarise debate round definite issues, and provide a uniting campaigning focus. OUSU's support for the NUS demonstration on 21st November is a step in the right direction, and is strongly supported by the Oxford Left: a Slate standing in this term's Student Union elections, which aims to make OUSU more democratic and inclusive. Our university's Student Union must address its position towards the students it claims to be representing. As Higher Education institutions are being threatened, a representative student union must defend education in the interest of current and prospective students. Making OUSU a campaigning, integrated and responsive student union that puts the student at the heart of their education is what is necessary to tackle its current irrelevance in the eyes of the

majority of students.

Oxford is one of the most middle-class universities in the country – its social profile shows it is 89% upper- and middle-class[6] – and its political apathy is a reflection of privilege. The financial problems many students face are less of a problem at Oxford and governmental changes are less devastating at a university where the majority of its funding comes from external donors, not central government. However given the importance of the student voice and the lack of other representative political institutions within Oxford, it is necessary to tackle OUSU's crisis of irrelevance and ensure that our University has a central political body that actively and inclusively represents its students.

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A version of this article also appeared on the Oxford Left slate's website http://oxfordleft. wordpress.com/.

1   Along with Oxford Brookes student union: http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/datablog/2012/sep/28/worst-student-unions-national-survey.
2   See oxfordstudent.com/2012/07/28/sub-fusc-gender-restrictions-thrown-out/ and www.guardian.co.uk/education/2012/jul/29/oxford-university-dress-code-transgender-students.
3   See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oxford_University_Student_Union#Protests_and_occupations.
4   See http://www.suttontrust.com/news/news/private-school-pupils-55-times/.
5   See www.indymedia.org.uk/en/2012/10/501795.html.
6   See http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2010/dec/06/oxford-colleges-no-black-students.

THE LEFT MUST COMBAT SOCIETY'S ENVIRONMENTAL APATHY

Joel Duddell

Apathy towards the environment is one of the biggest challenges faced by today's student generation. It is a problem broadly associated with the right of the political spectrum, but it touches the whole of mainstream politics. This article will seek to identify the specific problems in attitude that our political system demonstrates; will suggest that those on the Left should be very concerned with this; and will outline a range of solutions.

Britain has a serious attitude problem as far as green issues are concerned. In the press environmental piecemealism abounds. As far as I can tell, the *Daily Mail* website, one of the most popular online newspapers in the world, has no environment section. Its main page certainly lacks a link to an environment section. To its credit, *The Telegraph* online has an entire section on climate change. But it is hidden away in the mysteriously labelled 'Earth' section, which is itself a subsection of 'News'. There is a clear lack of emphasis on environmental issues in the mainstream press, and this is deeply damaging. It affects public perceptions of the significance of climate change and other environmental issues. If something is not in the press, people presume that it is no longer an issue. The public at large asks itself: if climate change is so pressing, why are the papers not reporting it any more? Climate change becomes an inconvenient truth that is ignored, or a myth that is disregarded.

The decline of climate change and the environment as pressing public concerns is reflected in parliament. Here, politicians pick up green issues when it suits them, and drops them when it doesn't. It's fine to kick up a storm when someone threatens to blemish your panoramic country view with a wind turbine; it's OK to condemn the culling of badgers. But transient anger at such issues rarely translates into a genuine, general concern for the well-being of the planet. We're stuck with an inane, self-concerned discourse: you need to provide us with more energy, but you can't build wind turbines in the Home Counties. You can build a third runway at Heathrow, but you can't run a high-speed railway line through my constituency.

In his speech at the Liberal Democrat conference in September, Nick Clegg spoke of the need for his party to claim the government's green policy for their own as the Tories lose sight of their green objectives. He may have just been hanging on to remains of his 2010 manifesto, but Mr Clegg painted an accurate picture as he highlighted the decline of environmental issues in mainstream politics. Yet the fact that the environment is seen as a distinct policy area to which a coalition partner can lay claim is symptomatic of a wider, more worrying issue. While the Tories lead on 'the economy', the Lib Dems want to take charge on 'the environment'. The two are seen as distinct policy areas. This is damaging for the status of environmental issues in the public eye. Environmental sustainability is relegated below economic stability. It becomes acceptable for politicians to prioritise the economy over the environment. It was in this vein that at the 2011 Conservative Party Conference, George Osborne stated that 'we're not going to save the planet by putting our country out of business'. There is no suggestion in the main-

stream political arena that long-term environmental planning should be a variable considered in all areas of government policy.

These attitudes and approaches should concern those on the Left more than those of any other political persuasion. At a global level global warming is already impacting on the lives of real people. Michael Zammit Cutajar, the former executive secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change has suggested that 'climate change is not just a distant threat but a present danger'. Indeed, global warming is already a predicted 1.6% annually from global GDP. It is poor, developing countries like Bangladesh and the Pacific Islands that are feeling this pain now, as annual floods are exacerbated beyond precedented parameters. Similarly, it will be poorer individuals and small, emerging businesses that will suffer most when the effects of climate change really impact on Europe and the UK.

So, what are the solutions to environmental apathy?

Firstly, it is vital to challenge the rhetoric which paints environmental campaigners as tree-hugging extremists who stand in opposition to the majority of pragmatically-minded people. This notion comes across very strongly from a number of Conservative MPs. On the 25th of October Peter Lilley MP was admitted to the Commons energy select committee. Immediately, he coined a new phrase: 'I am a global lukewarmist'. He went on. We should not 'silence those who disagree [with climate change science] by calling them "deniers"... equating them with holocaust deniers'. Lilley is accusing the climate change lobby of equating climate change sceptics with deniers of the Holocaust. Not only is this deeply insulting, but it is pointlessly polemical. Lilley's self-proclaimed quest is to neuter the dichotomy between the lobbies that recognise and dismiss anthropological climate change. He is not going to achieve this by using such language. In contrast to Lilley's hype, the point must be made calmly and coolly that environmentalists are extremist reactionaries; rather, environmentalism is a deeply rational cause that can be taken up by anyone from any background.

Those who want the environment to occupy a more central role in the public consciousness just have to keep banging the drum on this, stressing how long-term environmental planning can work for everyone. At the moment green energy is for middle-class *Guardian* readers who can afford solar panels. It is for ex-footballers like Gary Neville, who can afford to indulge their green zeal by building massive eco-homes. It is up to politicians on the Left to make the link between working people and the environment, and to stress that measures like the acquisition of wind energy on a national scale would reap rewards for the whole nation, not just a limited few.

Moreover, politicians from the Left must stress the ways in which the recession and environmental issues can be tackled together. By 2014 it is predicted that the green economy in Britain will have grown by 40% since 2007. In tough times, the private sector is clearly appreciating the financial and ethical benefits of the less-with-more mantra of environmental planning. The green economy is creating jobs and wealth despite the recession, perhaps even because of it. But this progress is in danger of being lost. Government investment in fibre optic cables and renewable energy infrastructure is needed now to make this short-term growth stable in the long-term.

Environmentalism, then, could be the key to a more successful approach to the current economic crisis. George Osborne reiterates how important it is that Britain is resilient to volatile world markets. Any improvement here will be undone if finite energy resources finally run out and we are left with spiralling energy costs. Osborne rejects long-term stability via renewable energy supplies in favour of increased reliance on gas imported from Norway. Those on the Left want to draw a contrast between themselves and the Tories – they can do so by committing to long-term environmental planning. The Confederation of British Industry believes that green business could halve our trade deficit by 2014-15. The Left must seize on the potential of renewable energy to make us a more stable, self-sufficient society.

All in all, a comprehensive political re-branding of the Left is needed, to realign the Labour movement with the colour green and challenge environmental disinterest in the political arena. Bizarrely, environmental campaigners can learn something from UKIP here. Kicking up a fuss about immigration and the EU, UKIP have forced Cameron to acknowledge their concerns as he seeks to guarantee a majority after the next election. Cameron moves to the right to accommodate UKIP sympathisers. In the same way, advocates of green energy and the climate change lobby must appeal directly to the Labour Party to recognise their concerns. Even if the Labour Party responds only in a cynical attempt to gain more votes, this process would at least bring environmental issues more prominently into mainstream politics.

In short, the Left must seize the initiative in terms of green issues. In this age of broken trust in politics, the Left must seek to replace the culture of inane global summits and missed environmental targets with serious investment in environmental infrastructure. The economic and political arguments in favour of environmental planning must be made by the Left and by the Labour Party. Only then might Britain's culture of environmental apathy be reversed.

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A shorter version of this article appeared in the Oxford Student newspaper.

David and Goliath: the history of the Raasay miners' strike

Matt Myers

On the Left we need our own histories. Not the history of kings, queens, treaties, and conferences, but of ordinary people. This essay is a micro-history in that tradition. Raasay is a small island between the Scottish mainland and the Isle of Skye. The aim of this essay is to chart the Raasay miners' strike of December 1917 in the context of the island's history. An event without any thorough historical research, the strike remains not only a unique event in Britain's labour relations, but also a unique piece of history, in and of itself. By focussing on a confined geographical space such as an island, the historian can reliably chart the continuity of island life, and subsequent changes wrought by external forces. A micro-history can also, however, pose problems. If one focusses too densely on a specific moment in history, it remains easy to forget the wider meta-trends and changes that contribute to the event itself. A deep understanding of the nature of the time, the nature of the island, the continuity of its history, as well as the nature of the iron mine itself, are all central. For micro-history, the sources are critical. It remains a recurring theme in the strike that the very agents of the event (the strikers) have left no historical records of their own. The historian must then piece together their motivations from second hand accounts from reporters or interested bodies. The historian's role is to give these crofters, turned workers, turned strikers, a voice.

These sources are varied; the local papers such as the Oban Times, records of parliamentary debates listed in Hansard, the mining company's own documents, and,, crucially,, first-hand accounts by eyewitnesses, listed in secondary sources like the Drapers' The Raasay Iron Mine 1912-1942. Not all these sources were created equal. Each source has varying degrees of dissonance from the actual event. It is, however, true that the records from the papers indicate that journalists were conscious of the details of the labour dispute, and records from Hansard indicate politicians were obviously very knowledgeable of the conditions of the strikers. The closest source to the voice of the miners comes from Baird's (the mining company that administered the mine on Raasay) records of a session held by the Attorney general to hear the grievances of 27 miners before the strike.[1] Either way, these secondary sources cannot make up for the lack of a narrative by the historical agents themselves. Historians of the event must piece together what they can.

The strike itself started on Thursday 4th December 1917. The contributing factors can be traced to both the history of the mine on the island, and to the Raasay's pre-mine history and sociological composition. As a percentage of the populace, Raasay had a large crofting community. This group had been depleted by years of enforced emigration, either by coercion or want. Those locals left on the island either scratched a living on crofts in the northern, less fertile part of the Island (the fertile middle section had been converted by the Woods family into a shooting range), or working directly in maintaining the Woods estate, fishing, or finding intermittent work outside the island.

In May 1911 William Baird & Co Ltd bought island from the Wood family, the previous owner of the estate. The mine was ready in the summer of 1914, yet soon lay idle due to the lack of man-power from men called up to the war. Out of 36 local Raasay men called to the colours, 22 were killed. To compensate for this, Bairds' demanded 260 German prisoners of war from the Ministry of Munitions to act as labour for the mine. These were delivered somewhat reticently in the summer of 1916, in breach of the Hague Convention. Almost immediately the Government took on legal ownership of the mine and employed Baird's as a private contractor, due to the perceived political complications of having a private provider employ Prisoners of War. Baird's records indicate that sixty British men, along with thirty local men, were employed by the mine, along with the 260 POWs. This figure is also backed by the account of John Macleod in Draper.[2] It is in this context that the tension in labour relations between the locals, the imported workers, and Baird's and the government developed. This remained unlike any labour relation elsewhere in Britain at the time, and can be seen as one factor in the disturbances.

The prisoners, it seems, were paid by Bairds' in a far smaller amount than the one agreed by the government.[3] Draper[4] suggests a piece rate of 1s was paid to the miners.[5] The only recorded wages are those of the POWs. The lack of detail on the pay and conditions of the locally employed men is possibly testament to their undervalued and peripheral position in the mine. It may also indicate that they were paid informally on a local contract, with Baird's finding no reason to alert the government of its terms.

Labour unrest built from February 1917 onwards. In February the Labour Department awarded Cumberland miners an increase in wages from 7s-6d to 9s-6d per shift and war bonus of 5s-0d per week.[6] There was no record for this for the Raasay men. This issue was brought up by the miners at a meeting held to allow the miners to air their grievances to the Solicitor General for Scotland on Saturday 3rd March 1917. How the local men heard about the Cumberland miners' victory is unclear, although one could possibly deduce that they either read it in a paper, or more likely, heard about their wages from their better paid mainland colleagues whom Baird's had brought over to work. It is recorded that two mainland miners claimed their wages were adequate, and that their wages were twice those paid to the islanders who gave evidence.[7] The financial grievances, in their relation to their other workers, were a large factor in the strike, months later.

Alexander Gillies chaired the meeting and reported that the Islanders complained of low wages and unrepaired houses, according toan accurate condensed report in Hatch. This piece of evidence indicates that the islanders believed that Baird's had a formal obligation to the upkeep of their properties. From archaeological evidence at the Inverarish housing blocks, and Baird's company records, some locals did live on the same site (outside the prison compound) for the other miners. These blocks were built by Baird's before the POW's arrived, with each house only having enough garden space to grow a small amount of produce. Norma Macleod[8] claims the lack of land to use as pasture and arable as one of the major grievances in the pre-strike meeting, chaired by Alexander Gillies of Rona. This grievance is understandable given the history of the local men as crofters. Mr Adamson MP alludes also to this in a Parliamentary debate on the Raasay matter,[9] discussed in detail below. Most simply wanted to have enough land to live a crofting lifestyle, yet circumstances throughout the 19th century forced locals to take on work such as fishing and upkeep of the estate. The role of the locals (who all worked

on the surface) in the project can be seen as the continuation of a trend.

Grievances were again reported to have broken out on the 27th November 1917,[10] and then two weeks later (11th December) the strike was reported in the Inverness Courier:
"The natives of the Island of Raasay, who are employed at the surface works at the mines stopped work on Thursday 4th, without giving notice to the management, but the work at the mine is proceeding as usual. It is rumoured that they sent in a demand for an increase of 10s per week in wages; that they be supplied with sufficient land for their own use; that all Germans be removed from the Island; and that all miners now employed at Raasay mines be removed from the Island. It has not transpired if any reply has been received."[11]

The evidence seems to point to a form of "wildcat" strike. It seems a logical impossibility that the workers could have given notice of the strike to management, as the local workers had no union and no history of trade unionism. The source must be eyed with caution, however. The news story was probably collated from second- or third-hand information relayed to a journalist in Inverness (Raasay would not have warranted a full-time correspondent). Even so, it remains important in deducing the motives of the workers. The demands seem very confused and self-contradictory. How could the workers both demand a wage increase and land, and maintain that all Germans and British miners be removed from the island (effectively closing the mine)?

The strained relationship between the striking locals and the Germans, however, was not the one which is noted by John Macleod.[12] Stories of locals giving extra food rations to prisoners may be true, yet most of the stories of friendship listed in Draper were between the officials of Baird's (such as Mr Munro-Baird's chief mining engineer) and the prisoners, rather than the prisoners and islanders. Norma Macleod notes that prisoners did not have to work Sundays (due to the Hague Convention), while British (and presumably islanders) did. Raasay has always had a very religious, nonconformist, culture, and so this may have been a serious grievance. Other grievances not listed in the article may well have been the environmental degradation caused by the mine. The sea between Raasay and Skye went a rusty colour and fine red ash was deposited on the windward side when the mine was in operation.[13]

During a Prime Minister's debate in the Commons,[14] the Raasay issue was raised for the first time by Mr Adamson (Labour MP for West Fife). The friction between the locals and the mining operators exposed by Adamson has already been discussed. The most interesting part of the source, however, is his insistence that Baird's used the war and the German POWs as intimidation against the striking miners. Adamson claimed that the Raasay men's wages were around 4s per day.[15] How he knew this exactly is unclear. Given the history of Baird's paying less to its workers on Raasay than officially stated (such as for the POWs), it is not clear that anyone besides the miners themselves knew their wages.

Further to the intimidation from Baird's and the alleged strike breaking by Prisoners of War, Adamson alludes to the inadequate conditions of the Islanders. He describes there being only one shop on Raasay which was run by Baird's, and from which the locals had to buy produce.[16] He also claims that their wages were paid monthly rather than weekly, as in the rest of the country. Why Baird's felt they could treat the workers this way seems mixed. They were not

unionised, they were crofters, and it is arguable whether they were central to the process of capital accumulation. They were, after all, mostly surface workers like cleaners and the pier-master. Both their small number (just over thirty) and social function in the productive process meant that their labour was less valuable to Baird's, and so could be replaced. It is important to note that according to Baird's documents, production was not affected and remained within expected fluctuation in December and January during the strike. This certainly backs the argument that the Raasay men were not central to the process of capital accumulation at the mine.

The consequences of the strike reached the top of British political society. Their grievances had already been heard by the Prime Minister in Parliament, and now their strike was to catch the attention of the union movement and the rest of civil society. On 28th December 1917 the Inverness Courier reported that the Executive of the National Union of Scottish Mineworkers had met and discussed a report submitted by a delegation to Raasay. They heard their demands, and agreed to allow them in future to form a branch of the NUSM. This article is the only allusion to a union delegation to the island. What one can deduce from the type of response of the mining union, is that strikes, most especially in war time, were considered very pressing issues. It is likely that both the government and the unions feared strikes as both a threat to production, a threat to morale (especially in a mine with POWs), and for the unions, a threat to their command over labour relations nationally. The report said that there were prospects of a settlement as the management had agreed to communicate with the Ministry of Munitions at once regarding the workers claim to 10s per week.[17]

The management and government, it seemed, were not fast enough to calm the strike, or more importantly, the embarrassing scandal reaching the public. On Friday 11th the Scotsman published a full article entitled "German Prisoners used as Strike Breakers".[18] It similarly reported that the President of the National Union of Miners, Robert Smillie, had met with Winston Churchill, who was acting Minister of Munitions. Churchill had pledged that if this allegation was true, then the Germans would be removed. Smillie, at a similar meeting at the Ministry of Munitions two days after, claimed the Germans had still not been removed. He specifically mentioned the use of a German prisoner as filling in the position of pier-master during the strike, an important job, once filled by an islander.[19]

It is not totally clear whether the Germans were strike breaking in the usual sense. Norma Macleod[20] claims that the Germans simply maintained the previous roles they had, and due to the fluidity between different job tasks above ground, it would be impossible to deduce whether the Germans were strikebreaking, or simply carrying out a job which they would have done previously. Norma Macleod's criticism of the allegation of strike-breaking is inadequate. The key roles carried out by the strikers would have been filled by either prisoners or by imported British strikebreakers if the mine was to carry on production (as it did in December 1917).

The strike officially ended on 15th January 1918. All strikers were reinstated, and the NUM agreed to send another £50 donation to the Raasay strikers. The newspaper reports in the Oban Times and Glasgow Herald make no mention of a change in the rate of pay. The only evidence for the settlement comes from an oral source of Mr John MacLeod[21] who claims that ten totwenty of them did win a substantial increase, plus donations from various sources more than recouped those lost in wages. Due to the fact that Baird's (and the government) probably

wished to think no more of the strike and the scandal it caused, it is not surprising that there were no press releases . The type of employment the Raasay men were in probably lent itself to the fact that their contacts were informal and with documentation a luxury. We can only trust in the truth of Macleod's lone voice on the matter.

The Raasay strike was a truly extraordinary, and hitherto un-researched, episode in British labour relations. The influence of a strike by only thirty surface mine workers, previously crofters and with no experience of unionisation (or even wage-labour) reached the highest levels of government. The Raasay mine, whose workers included both mainland British, local men, and of crucial importance, 260 German Prisoners of War, gave the strike its unique nature. The thirty Raasay men who struck in December 1917 wished nothing more than a piece of land to call their own, and enough food to feed their families. High land rents, evictions, and the collapse of the local fishing industry forced them to seek paid work in the mine. Theirs is the story of a simple people thrust into the heart of a capitalist war economy, proletarianised by the force of circumstance. Yet where you have wage-labour and capital accumulation, you also have resistance. The Raasay miners exemplify this universal characteristic of the international working class. Even if the historian cannot recreate the voices of those thirty striking islanders, one grants them a voice by writing them a history they themselves never had the means, nor the thought, to write. The story of those Raasay men is just one story in the history of our side.

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1   Glasgow University archives. Baird and Co Ltd documents listed under reference UGD/164/1/…

2   Laurence & Pamela Draper, *The Raasay Iron Mine 1912-1942: Where enemies became friends* (self-published, 1990) pg 17

3   A letter from Mr A K McCosh (from Baird's archives) on 28th April 1916 (before the prisoners arrived) to the Ministry of Munitions, suggested paying the miners 3s per day for 10 hours on surface, and 3s per day for 8 hours underground, or piece rate of 4d per tonne.

4   Draper, p, 12.

5   This is backed by account (also in Draper) from Alex Fisher (fireman, i.e. safety inspector) of giving food too one prisoner who insisted on handing over his wages (1s) in order to keep his dignity and independence.

6   Hatch, F.H. *The Iron & Steel industry of Furness and District* (Hume Kitchen: Ulverston,1908), (p. 83.

7   Draper, p. 19.

8   Norma Macleod, *Raasay: The Island and its People* (, Edinburgh: Bellin, 2002), p. 160.

9   *Hansard*, 5th Series, Vol. 100, p. 2232-20, December 1917: In Prime Minister's review of war situation, Adjournment Motion: "They are crofters by trade, they come from a crofting community. They wish to both work in the mines and work their own land. The worst land on the island has been preserved for them, the best part fenced off for dear and other game."

10   *Inverness Courier*, 27th November 1917: "The Ministry of Munitions issued a statement showing grievances among the Raasay Islanders relative to the wages paid at the iron ore mines and other conditions on the Island: The Ministry of Munitions states that in regard to all matters for which that Department as owners of the iron ore mines are responsible, full enquiries have been made and steps taken to remove all legitimate grounds of complaint, whether as to wages or otherwise".

11   *Inverness Courier*, 11th December 1917.

12   "Both British men and locals worked well with the prisoners," Draper, p. 16-18.

13   N. Macelod, p. 163.

14   *Hansard*, 5th Series, Vol. 100, pp. 2232-20, December 1917: In Prime Minister's review of war situation, Adjournment Motion: "Five of six years ago one of the large iron and coal companies bought one of the islands on the west coast of Scotland, namely the Island of Raasay. The firm is that of William Baird and Company. The population of Raasay was a crofting population. From the very moment the company took possession, started to win iron ore and tried to get the necessary labour from the crofting population, there has been continued friction. When these men asked for higher wages they were met with a statement that if they did not care to accept the wages that were offered then they could join the army. When they struck against the wages they were paid, German Prisoners of War were used for the purpose of forcing them to accept unfair conditions."

15   Ibid.

16   Ibid. This is the same practice outlined in Engels' *Condition of the Working Class in England* (London, 1887) among many Lanarkshire factory owners.

17   Draper, p. 17.

18   Ibid.

19   Draper, p. 21.

20   Macleod p. 161.

21   Draper.

THE FINANCIAL SYSTEM: NOTES FROM THE FUTURE

The curious document reproduced below was recently leaked from the Centre for Future Studies, University of Wareva. It is believed to be a translation from the Neo-Sogdian, and has been tentatively dated to the forty-second century A.D, or seventeenth of the Post Miraculo era. Dates are given according to this (Miraculum) calendar; their equivalents in our era are supplied between square brackets.

Strange Revelations of Fifth-Century Life

Experts from the Institute of Cyberarchaeology, New Harmony, have succeeded in decoding long-unreadable digital records surviving from Planet Earth in the fifth century Ante Miraculo [twenty-first A.D.], which shed new light on the life of that remote period of the past. Dr Psippa Nerenti, a researcher from the team, explains: 'We are beginning to uncover evidence of a quite remarkable and unsuspected dimension of late sixth and early fifth-century [twentieth and twenty-first century] Terrestrial civilization.

'The humans of that time appear to have constructed a vast system of electronic connections and data-patterns, to which they granted quite extraordinary status and power. At its heart were the computerized algorithms we are currently deciphering, which seem to amount to a sort of abstract art: works of great formal beauty, yet almost entirely detached from the material and spiritual life of the planet's then inhabitants. Some of the finest intellectual workers and the most sophisticated technologies of the age must have been dedicated entirely to its service. Associated with the core of abstract algorithmic patterns was a whole network of institutions extending into almost all inhabited areas of the Earth. Both the patterns and the network were known to the Terrestrians by the common name of 'Finance'.

'Its purpose remains a mystery; our researchers are frankly baffled on that point. Its closest affinities appear to be with earlier forms of art and highly organised religion: the combination of abstract aesthetic-intellectual production with widespread institutional and social controls. It was, however, considered quite separate from the older, residual forms of art and religion that then existed. Indeed, it seems to have incorporated them into its calculations as indifferently as any other element of the civilization. Its mode of operation, from what we have uncovered of it, seems to have had odd similarities to earlier forms of sport or gambling: the matching of one set of powerful computerized equations against another, in a perpetual and ritualized contest.'

How exactly did it attain this level of power over the human societies of the time? Dr Nerenti summarised the current thinking on this. 'Records from the earlier periods, in the seventh and sixth [nineteenth and twentieth] centuries, are somewhat scanty,' she pointed out. 'From what we can find it appears to have had its origins in the commercial or 'capitalist' system that was so influential in that late stage of the Third Era. It retained – this is one of its oddest features – a vocabulary derived from the earlier stages of the commercial system: 'markets', 'trading', and so forth, concepts well known to our colleagues working on the eleventh to sixth centuries

A.M. [fifteenth to twentieth A.D.]. In the period of which we have most evidence, the early fifth [twenty-first] century, it seems to have still operated through institutions surviving from the commercial period, but there is some data suggesting that in a later phase it discarded these. Even in the late sixth [twentieth] century, however, the 'Financial' system seems to have been progressively moving beyond its earlier subordinate function of servicing the actual operations of commerce (which of course continued through this phase of Third Era civilization). Increasingly these operations, which had once had a practical basis, were being almost entirely subordinated to the arbitrary demands and values generated by the 'financial markets'. The basis of this seems to have been the growth of early computer technologies, on which the system largely depended.'

We also interviewed Professor Thereaujohn Kharalue of the Academy of Earth Studies, Barebones Five, the well-known expert on the Terrestrial civilizations of the Third Era. He commented: 'It is perhaps too early to speculate, but it is beginning to seem possible that this 'Financial' system was far more widely influential than previously thought. The researchers at the Institute have traced a series of direct effects, in the most important aspects of people's daily lives, of the essentially random values generated in this highly abstract form of art or ritual. It seems that the inhabitants of Earth in the early fifth century Ante Miraculo [twenty-first century A.D.] may have taken to a hitherto unknown level the domination of ordinary life processes by an abstract system of rules and values. Precedents are of course numerous: to go much further back, for instance, those humans of the tenth millennium Ante Miraculo [seventh to eighth millennia B.C.] who would plant crops only when the auguries were favourable, sacrificial victims chosen by lottery, and so forth. But what I believe we are seeing in these computerized records is a vast system of domination extending the direct power of this 'Finance' system into the smallest details of life, over the whole of this remarkable (though admittedly in some ways exceedingly primitive) civilization. A random numeric value generated within the computational algorithms in some part of the 'Finance' complex could thus have an observable effect on millions or hundreds of millions of people in different parts of the planet. Such a wide-reaching and powerful (though it must also be said, extraordinarily arbitrary and at times distinctly cruel) system is quite astonishing to imagine.'

What, however, were the real purposes of this mysterious 'Financial' system? On this point Professor Kharalue was reticent. 'The one element of real mystery,' he told us, 'is what could have motivated the then inhabitants of Earth (or their dominant groups and rulers) to create and sustain such an order. Records of what we may call a general-cultural kind are rather minimal for this period; the computerized data of the 'market' system itself is a remarkable survival. One speculation is perhaps permissible, however. We have known for some time that Third Era Terrestrial civilization entered what can roughly be called a new phase at about this time: in particular, its destructive aspects seem to have intensified, with new and (by our standards) quite reckless levels of military technology and damage to the Terrestrial ecology. It seems plausible that these manifestly irrational tendencies were bound up with this vast system of abstract ritual in many complex ways. At the same time, the rhetorics and philosophies which surrounded it seem – from what little we know of them – to have functioned to obscure this connection. The existence of the 'market' system was widely known and tolerated, indeed actively supported. For instance, both electronic and paper-based newspapers, common forms of public information in that era, devoted a large proportion of their space to these 'financial'

matters. Incredible as it sounds to us now, an effective majority of the Earth's inhabitants appears to have genuinely believed that this system was fundamentally rational and conducive to material and spiritual progress. Perhaps in this conjunction, and this remarkable failure of understanding, we are beginning to trace the true sources of the disorder and confusion that were to break out so openly and disastrously in the Fourth Era of Terrestrial history.'

The team's research into the preserved cybernetic data at New Harmony continues.

A report from Quebec: protest works

Ani Kodzhabasheva

On 16 October, we were honoured to hear Jérémie Bédard-Wien report on the student movement in Quebec as part of a conference organized in Oxford by the Education Activist Network. One of the prominent figures of the Quebecois protests (but not a leader, as he was quick to point out), Jérémie was here to tell us the story of how the movement evolved and to express support for those working to build a popular movement in the UK. With a historic victory behind him, Jérémie set out to give us some advice.

The movement in Quebec began from the structures of governance already present in the universities. At the core were the student unions' general assemblies, whose decisions are binding for all bodies of the student unions as well as for all students, Jérémie explained. This is a situation very different from Oxford's, with our JCRs and MCRs uninterested in politics and our Student Union "irrelevant to the average Oxford student" (according to an OUSU officer quoted in *The Cherwell*).

Comparing Oxford to Canadian universities, Jérémie said, "Our buildings are made of concrete and our admissions processes rather more relaxed." The existing culture of community and equality seems to have contributed to the protests' success.

It was at the general assemblies that the decision was taken to begin a strike. The "more radical" campuses went on strike first and got the "less radical" ones to follow them, Jérémie said. From there, it got to the point where 300 000 university students were on strike. As many as half of all enrolled students gathered in the largest mass demonstration. The authorities responded with repression: in May, a new law called Bill 78 effectively banned protests. However, hundreds of thousands still went out and took part in "illegal" demonstrations, creating what Jérémie called "the largest civil disobedience in the history of North America."

The key was organization and perseverance. "Demonstrations should not be seen as single events," Jérémie said; "you need escalation, you need strong, sustained action." It took about six months of continuous action in Quebec. Jérémie also emphasized the importance of strike as a strategy. Disruptions of the state's normal functioning are powerful forms of action due to their economic significance, he thinks. The students' actions were causing major capital losses; that is what made the government agree to negotiate with students in the first place, and eventually to fulfil their demands. With protesters disturbing urban transit, keeping universities "out of business" and even blocking the Montreal stock exchange in one direct action, the situation was intolerable for those in power.

After Jérémie's talk, we discussed the problem of single-issue activism versus building a movement with a broad platform. The audience wanted to know, first, how the Canadian students achieved such a high level of consensus; and also whether it was the specificity of their demands (to stop the raise in tuition fees) that enabled the positive outcome.

Jérémie said that consensus was not an issue: people from all across the Left were able to work together. The General Assemblies were composed of "anarchists who would engage in direct action, socialists who would do planning, and social democrats who tweet." It may sound like a joke of the "three Lefties walk into a bar" type – but Jérémie's is a powerful lesson in solidarity.

The Quebecoise movement was also not a single-issue affair, Jérémie emphasized. Having a broader platform is not a problem – indeed, it is what keeps people engaged and keeps the movement going. This spring in Canada was about much more than tuition fees. The real success, Jérémie said, was that "we managed to reverse the course of neoliberalism." And the hundreds of thousands of students were not united just around the single demand of lowering fees; Jérémie explained that, in the occupied campuses, radical thinking and imagining were taking place. "Free schools were set up. Assemblies began to discuss overarching issues, capitalism itself." He added, "It was a very fruitful time, politically." Quebec's example shows that the choice between "one demand"-type activism and a broad ideological platform is a nonissue. We need both.

After Jérémie, Elizabeth Meadows spoke. The mother of a young student almost killed by the police came to Oxford to urge us to go out and protest. Ms. Meadows, it turns out, was often in the streets of London, just like her son. Undeterred by the police brutality that, for her, came so close to home, she now supports protest in the UK all the more passionately. Elizabeth Meadows told us how she approached a riot police officer once and asked him why he chose this job. "Protest never works," he told her. And she came here to say that it does. Like Jérémie and the majority of students in Quebec have showed, protest works.
Get involved.

Ani Kodzhabasheva is reading for a Masters in History of Art at Worcester College.

Review: *Dogma and Disarray: Cameron at Half-Time*

By Polly Toynbee and David Walker

Sean Robinson

Dogma and Disarray: Cameron at Half-Time: Granta Books, £5.00, Sept. 2012.

If journalism is the "first rough draft of history", as Alan Barth of the Washington Post wrote in the 1940s, then this new book by two Guardian columnists is the second. In *Dogma and Disarray: Cameron at Half-Time,* Polly Toynbee and David Walker give a comprehensive yet concise (88 pages) recap of the last two years of the coalition, sketching a convincing pattern of "disarray": the contradictions and confusion in almost all areas of government, alongside the "dogma": Cameron and Osborne's "determination to dismantle the state".

The book's main argument is that Cameron came into government with one overriding aim: to complete Thatcher's revolution: "she had privatised the nationalized industries, but Cameron would privatize the state itself". The programme of austerity was ideologically driven and fiscal arguments, made possible by the financial crisis, were useful justifications. "Claiming cuts caused recovery served a prime purpose: to get rid of as much public spending as these opportune circumstances would allow".

The main bulk of the book is a well-presented, wide-ranging litany of the policies of the last two years. The argument is repeated and rephrased a few times but on the whole the authors realise that a clear description of the policies and the decision-making process will be more powerful and more persuasive than page after page of argument. This is not the first book of the kind they have written: in 2011 they released *The Verdict: Did Labour Change Britain?*, a much more positive account of Labour's 13 years in power. That book asked the question: "Why not more in so long?" This new book leaves you wondering: "How so much, so quickly?"

Cameron, with help from advisor Steve Hilton, spent his time before the election convincing the country he was a "compassionate conservative". He understood that the electorate were "liberal and welfarist by instinct" and so told us that the Tories were "the party of the NHS", told us to "vote blue go green" and cosied up to community organisers like Citizens UK. He gave us lots of meaningless phrases, Toynbee and Walker tell us, to cover up his intention of shrinking the state. We had the "Big Society" – "as if people would spontaneously give up profiteering and rigging markets and turn altruistically to do good by their fellow citizens"; we had "nudge" – an unoriginal and extremely limited idea to change behaviour using incentives rather than spending, and therefore providing yet another excuse for cuts; and we had "choice", an easy buzzword that has been used just as much by Labour as by the Tories.

The authors argue that Cameron and Osbourne used the financial crisis, coupled with "nursery economics", to persuade the country that there was a fiscal necessity to make massive cuts to state spending. They ignored the lessons of the 1930s cuts which led to deepening depression, ignored the evidence that increasing tax works better than cutting spending, and unfairly characterised the British deficit as unhealthy, like that of Greece, when it was actually much more like Japan's economically pretty successful deficit – both British and Japanese deficits were owed mainly to home nationals and denominated in the domestic currency. Backed up by Mervyn King, Governor of the Bank of England, they ignored the repeated warnings of serious economists like Paul Krugman, Joseph Stiglitz and two comment editors from the *Financial Times*, Samuel Brittan and Martin Wolf – the latter describing the plan to cut demand as "unmitigated folly".

Many are calling for a Plan B now that there is growing evidence that the austerity measures are doing more harm than good. In 2010 Osborne said that growth would be at 2.5% by now; in April 2012 it was negative, at -0.3%. Toynbee and Walker say that such calls will fall on deaf ears. The reason that we have seen no Plan B is because "there is none, because the goal is not fiscal equilibrium but completion of what Margaret Thatcher began: nothing short of a revolution."

This argument is a tempting one to subscribe to, but Toynbee and Walker undermine it by seeming to argue simultaneously that Cameron had a real but entirely misplaced faith in the notion that "cutting and growth are profoundly and indissolubly related". In other words, the fiscal policy was not merely an excuse to "get rid of as much public spending as these opportune circumstances would allow," but was also motivated by a very real conviction that austerity was the right way to get the economy back on track, because "ratings agencies and bond traders would sustain UK national debt at low interest rates only if they could feel the pain". These are two seemingly contradictory arguments presented side by side – though they could have been reconciled. Toynbee and Walker could have argued that whilst leading Tories believed these economic arguments, they did so only because the arguments fit neatly into the Hayekian ideology that they were brought up on. It is much easier to embrace an economic argument which corresponds to your existing political values than it is to embrace one that contradicts them. Cameron and Osborne genuinely believed the economics they used to justify their attack on the state – and they believed it precisely because it justified their attack on the state.

Very little time is given to the coalition partners: Nick Clegg and his Liberal Democrats. Yes, Chapter Three is entirely devoted to the "Fellow Travellers" – but it is only four paragraphs long. It ends by characterising the Lib Dems as "useful idiots". The Liberal Democrats agreed to the "two great planks of the [Tory] platform: to carry out deficit reduction at a reckless pace and the bigger project of deconstructing the state". They concede that Clegg prevented the repeal of the Human Rights Act, but that beyond that "even Hercule Poirot could not detect much Liberal Democrat influence" on policy. Clegg's demanded referendum on voting reform was watered down so that it was on the alternative vote, not on proportional representation. And after making this concession Clegg watched as the Tories donated £660,000 and the use of their offices to the "No" campaign. The authors reckon that House of Lords reform looks "as likely to be realized as Clegg's winning the next election". They are right to argue that very

little Lib Dem policy has been realised, but they underplay how important it was to the realisation of Tory policy that Cameron had such willing coalition partners. Nick Clegg can take a lot of credit for facilitating the Tory policies of the last two years.

The hardest chapters to read are those on the NHS (Chapter 6, "The Ultimate Privatisation") and welfare reform (Chapter 8, "The Cruellest Cuts"). "The Ultimate Privatisation" begins with a quote from Mark Britnell, an intimate of David Cameron's, at a conference of private health care executives in 2010: "the NHS will be shown no mercy". The chapter goes on to confirm this statement: 49% of beds in NHS hospitals may be available for private patients; private companies already control swathes of the service – in Bath patients are being referred by Virgin Care primary care clinics to Virgin Care secondary care clinics, a conflict of interest not allowed even in the US; approval for the NHS was down from 70% in 2010 to 58% in 2011; with a frozen budget and rising administration costs, clinics have closed and waiting lists have risen. All this from the party that promised "no top down reorganisation of the NHS".

The Institute for Fiscal Studies has described the cuts to welfare as almost "without historical or international precedent" and said they will certainly increase child poverty. The cuts were uncoordinated, so that any one family could be hit several times over by cuts from the local council and various government departments. The government used tabloid scare stories to justify its removal of welfare. *Mail* and *Sun* articles were invoked to give the impression that all families drawing benefits were workless immigrants living in Kensington mansions, and so Cameron gained support for the policy to cap annual benefits for a working age family at £26,000, meaning that 67,000 households lost on average £83 per week. Those on Disability Living Allowance (DLA) were exempt from this policy but, utilising the same scare tactics again, the government planned to take two thirds of those currently receiving it off DLA by 2013. With social housing rents pushed up to 80% of the market level, those on minimum wage in the South East will have to move; the authors describe the Tory housing policy as "vindictive class clearance, unrelated to any strategic thinking about employment, transport or housing supply," a perfect example of both the dogma and the disarray in this government.

Whether or not you agree with Toynbee and Walker's argument itself, the book is a depressing read. You are bombarded with example after example of the government's attacks on the poor, their policies that inadvertently or intentionally increase the social divide, their doublespeak and their arrogance. Most of it is not new: you will probably have felt much of the anger and upset at these Tory policies before at some point in the last two and a half years. This takes all of that frustration, which you have spread out over a manageable period of time, adds a lot more to distress you and then removes the one consolation that you have had until now – that you can fight it, that it is not over. This second draft of history is written in the past tense – the NHS has been privatised, welfare provision has been decimated, education has been made more elitist – and we can no longer hold onto the comforting illusion that there is something we can do to stop it. Even if the Tories are voted out at the next election, they say, Cameron may "leave the field a winner".

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The Oxford Left Review is a journal of left-wing opinion based within the University of Oxford. Its goal is to encorage left-wing thinking in Oxford and to enable Oxford to contribute ideas to the left nationally. Its content spans the plural left. It invites contributions from students, academics and freelance writers, both inside and outside the University of Oxford. The OLR appears termly, in late November, March and June of each year.

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